Logic Loops, Metaleptic Muddles and the Narrating Self
How the Interior Hermeneutics of Biblical Narrative invite Readerly Self-Involvement

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Declaration

This work has been submitted to King's College London in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and no part of it has been previously submitted to King's College London or in any other university for a degree.

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is an examination of the theological significance of moments of metalepsis within biblical narrative. Metalepsis, as defined by narratologists, is the transgression of the normal boundaries between layers of a narrative. Close readings of Job 19:23, Mark 13:14, Luke 16:8 and moments within the Deuteronomic History illustrate the impact of such diegetic muddles, which are also identified in apocalyptic subsummation of the seer, shifts between first and third person narrative voice, and anomalous moments of narrative stage management. These biblical contaminations of narrative thresholds are highly comparable with instances of illusion in visual art, fourth wall breaks in theatre, appeals to the reader in novels and classical apostrophes. They confound the logical separation between spatiotemporal dimensions, lay bare the paradox inherent in representations of the past in the present, and demonstrate the willingness of biblical narrators to include themselves within the frame of their own stories.

Hermeneutically, such instances function as a form of narratological self-disclosure and enfold the time of the telling of the story into the horizon of the text. They model and reveal a fundamental supposition pregnant within much biblical narrative – that the world revealed within the text is analogous to or contiguous with the world of the narrator and the reader. Thus, every timeframe conceivable to the narrator is subsumed into biblical representation of reality.

Theologically, biblical metalepsis provokes consideration of providence and the meaning of history, of the presence of the divine in the process of reception and of the significance of the self. These themes emerge in the creedal claims of biblical narrators who include themselves within the frame of the text and also assert with assurance the promises of God. In these moments authoritative statements and confessions of the subjectivity of the narrating self are juxtaposed in a model of self-involvement that the reader is invited to reciprocate.

The themes outlined above are explored in dialogue with a number of hermeneuticists and theologians including Paul Ricoeur, Søren Kierkegaard and Erich Auerbach, whose explorations of time and narrative, of contemporaneity with Christ and the tyranny of the biblical world view provide context, counterpoint and conceptual background to the notion of readerly self-involvement that is developed throughout this study.


primary
diegetic
parables
voice
time
Job
Jesus
theological
story
formula
book
narrator
reading
John
Gospel
parable
apostrophe
text
understand
Kierkegaard
representation
biblical
audience
stories
texts
words
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Auerbach
model
reader
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other
interpretation
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effect
day
reality
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Ricoeur
diegesis
Christ
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moments
LORD
worlds
Mark
presence
discourse
historical
understanding
realism
context
history
readers
character
written
metalepsis
world
God

Epigraph

"I is reading it hundreds of times," the BFG said. "And I is still reading it and teaching new words to myself. It is the most scrumdiddlyumptious story."[1]

Mrs. May looked back at her. "Kate," she said after a moment, "Stories never really end. They go on and on and on. It's just that sometimes, at a certain point, one stops telling them."[2]

"Stories are wild creatures," the monster said. "When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?"[3]

[1] Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake, *The BFG* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Viking Penguin, 1985).
[2] Mary Norton, *The Borrowers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953).
[3] Patrick Ness, *A Monster Calls* (London: Walker Books, 2011).

Contents

Chapter One:

Boundaries between

Representation and Reality

1. Overview

When read, narrative introduces elapsed time into the reader's present. This creates a potential paradox through the convergence of the actual and the possible, and through the sudden contiguity of supposedly distinct worlds. The act of reading creates a threshold where representations of the past are made present and history gains a freight of metamorphic potential in the lives of readers.[4] Narrative encourages a vision of the meaningfulness of time and it reinterprets sequential events with accents of purpose and providence. Narrative is, in itself, a creedal claim: it is an assertion of the supremacy of meaning over chronology.

Theologically then, narrative is central to any human understanding of the divine: for the pursuit of transcendence and the search for the numinous demand the development of super-chronological themes. Theological narratives stake particular claims over *Chronos* and seek to rescue creatures from the tyranny of time. They suggest that space and time are charged with meaning. They collocate the transcendent and the immanent, inviting a reader to find eternal significance in both the movements present in history and the meaning of history in the present. In a Christian, Trinitarian reading of space and time it is of course obvious that history is perceived to be meaningful and that stories sort a semblance of sense from the otherwise inexorability of sequence. Biblical narrative asserts the presence of a singular *alpha* and *omega*, who transcends space and time and imbues this continuum with significance. Indeed, at the centre of the Christian claim regarding the meaningfulness of existence is a God who spoke the universe into being (Genesis 1:3), a Son who "said nothing to them without using a parable" (Matthew

[4] Given the openness of the biblical narrative to a range of potential readers, I draw no distinction between the reader anticipated by the text and readers (whether critical, ecclesiastical or other) who identify themselves as addressees.

13:34), and a Spirit who "moved men to speak from God" (2 Peter 2:21).[5] Given that God himself is understood to be a communicative agent first and foremost, and that he is consistently represented as a being who uses words and stories to render reality meaningful for his creatures, it is unsurprising that biblical narrators pursue this same purpose.

It is my contention that there are a range of remarkable moments in biblical narrative in which narratological structures foreground the temporal paradox that is inherent within narrative representations of reality. Within the span of biblical narrative, incursions and inconsistencies across story-telling thresholds muddle the 'now' of the narrative, the 'now' of the narrator and the 'now' of the reader. Such transgressions disclose the ontological absurdity that is ever present within narrative but not always obvious. They juxtapose the finitude of the biblical narrator with unconditional claims regarding the transcendent meaning of time and the resurrection of the Redeemer as the fulcrum of history. Brief glimpses of overt narratological self-reference and intrusion into the primary framework of the story are amongst the most interesting and significant of these structures. In these moments the subjectivity of the narrating self is made particularly and peculiarly present and yet, despite disclosure of their own circumscribed liminality, biblical narrators do not seem to dilute the transcendent claim over history that they assert.

Numerous examples suggest that the claims of biblical narrators are not diminished by their expressions of self-involvement, their acknowledgements of subjectivity, their confessions of temporality or the way in which they transgress the thresholds between apparently distinct narrative worlds. John, for example, notes that, "There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to

[5] All biblical quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). But he also claims that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him" (John 1:1-3). Evidently, awareness of his own limitations as a witness and story-teller does not lessen the claim he wishes to make over history. Though unavoidably subjective, and unexpectedly overt about this, biblical narrators abide in the overwhelming confidence provoked by their faith. "I know that my Redeemer lives," they say, and, "These [things] are written that you may believe."

A range of biblical narrators seem to assert that there is no contradiction in confessing subjectivity whilst at the same time making absolute truth claims. No overt mechanism is offered within the canon to anatomize the process of inspiration or to justify how a story-teller, who is an obviously finite expression of space and time, can voice that which is spoken as universal truth. This suggests that the self-involved and contaminated story-telling frames constructed by narrators are an incarnational declaration made with confidence under the conviction that God is, at the same time, supremely sovereign over the span of history and also personally and pneumatically involved in the lives of individual story-tellers, writers, narrators, and readers. Thus the claim of scripture to be divinely inspired is not necessarily a guarantee of the absolute accuracy of omniscient perspective, but is rather a promise that the 'One' who hovered over the surface of the deep, who wrought order from formless void, and who was involved in the mess of coronations, calamities and crucifixion is absolutely capable of breathing life into text and story, narrator and reader. Muddling narratological self-involvement invites a readerliness (by which I mean a particular manner and mode of reading) that rests on the promise of God's

own self-involvement. Indeed, Rowan Williams suggests that "revelation interrupts the uncertainties of history with a summons to absolute knowledge, God's knowledge of and interpretation of himself."[6]

I suggest that the potency of the biblical representation of reality is amplified rather than diminished by moments which confess the role of the narrator or which muddle narrative levels. This is because such moments embody the subsummation of the narrative reality into the divine story, and demand concomitant readerly self-involvement. By transgressing the normal separation between narrator, narratee and narrative these moments produce a loop of logic that binds the reader, with the narrator, into a shared model of reality. Confusion between the act of 'telling' and that which is 'told' muddles the sense of time and distance that separates the reader from the text, and the absurdity of such anomalies dismantles the normally unyielding separation between narratorial and readerly realities. Mutual contaminations between the reader's world and the worlds represented within the text invite subjective faith in an absolute God who holds the span of time together and fills it with meaning.

These moments lay bare the inner biblical hermeneutic through which narrative voices interpret prior texts and events and facilitate understanding that is at the same time compelling and complex, transformative and troubling, self-involving and unsettling. Inner biblical hermeneutics are thus an invitation or a doorway into the sort of 'second naiveté' described by Paul Ricoeur.[7] Previously inconceivable interpretative implications are generated through the suggestion that God transcends

[6] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.133.
[7] Paul Ricoeur, "We can…aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism [and] through interpreting we can hear again." *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 351.

the divide between the ‘written’ and the ‘read’; that he joins together the otherwise discombobulated worlds of the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the church fathers, the twenty-first century exegetes and every creature in between, and that grace and peace in Christ were no less present for them, and are no less present now than they were for Jesus’ contemporary disciples.

As such, moments that contravene the normal thresholds and frames around the worlds within the text are of substantial significance to the sustained transmissibility of the text and must be viewed as more than structural infractions or editorial anomalies. Indeed, they are amongst the most engaging features of biblical narrative, for such paradoxical encroachments model interoperability between worlds, challenge the selfhood and stance of the reader, invite appropriation and reception, and legitimate a range of interpretative approaches.

2. Metalepsis

Anomalous or unexpected movements between logically distinct strata of a narrative are described by numerous terms including transumption, intrusion, obtrusion, asides and frame-breaking. However, it is the term ‘metalepsis’ that has gained most traction, especially as a description of moments when a character or voice transgresses the threshold between situational worlds that are otherwise distinct.[8]

[8] Richard Hays has used metalepsis in a quite different, more figurative sense, employing the term in reference to echoes and allusions in which the New Testament redeploys terms from the Hebrew canon and assigns them new Christological meaning. Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989). He suggests that metalepsis is an echo of the old in a newer text which “places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences” between the two texts (p. 20). Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016): “Metalepsis is a literary technique of citing or echoing a small bit of a precursor text in such a way that the reader can grasp the echo only by recalling or recovering the original context from which the fragmentary echo came.” (p.14).

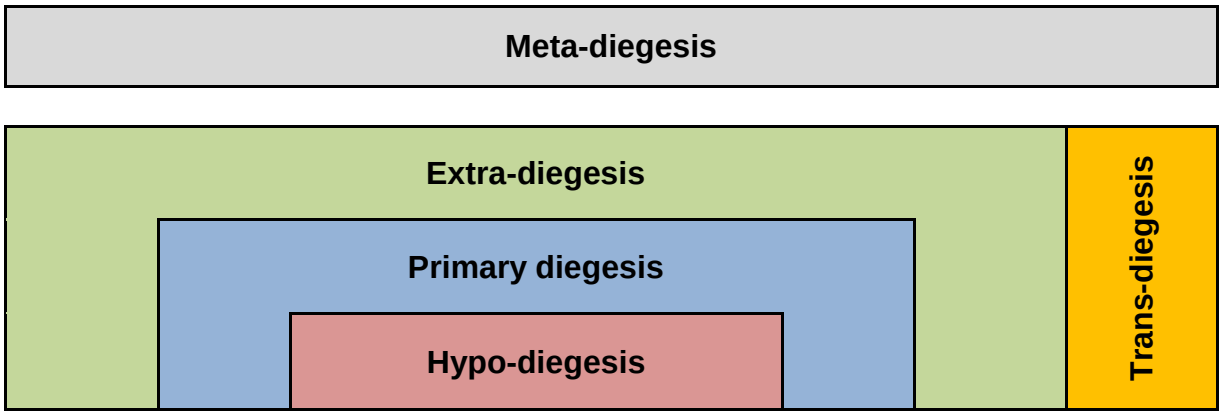
Metalepsis was one of the many rhetorical tools employed by Greek and Roman orators and lawyers, and the term originally described instances when a prosecutor might seize upon, and object to, a circumstantial aspect of the defendant's act, creating a prosecution case from an apparently inconsequential component of a defendant's narrative.[9] Deriving thus from the Greek terms *meta* and *lambesis*, metalepsis literally means 'to take beyond'.[10] Its application in modern narratology was first advanced by Gérard Genette in his 1972 work *Narrative Discourse* which explored narrative thresholds and developed a detailed examination of narrative structures. He defined metalepsis as:

> A violation of the separation between syntactically defined levels and a deviant referential operation that violates the thresholds of representation and involves the beholder in an ontological transgression of universes.[11]

Genette explored the relationship between the act of narration and the world of the story itself. He advanced the suggestion that every narrative fiction contains a number of distinct 'interior worlds' that are best understood according to the level they occupy in relationship to the primary narration. His model suggests that texts contain a primary level of 'diegesis' in which the characters within a story interact.[12] This layer of *primary diegesis* contains the thoughts and actions of all the characters within the main story. The voice of the narrator within a text inhabits a different interior world, located externally to the interactions of the characters of the primary diegesis in a layer which Genette defines as the *extra-diegetic*. If a further story is

[9] Malcolm Heath, 'Metalepsis, paragraphe and the scholia to Hermogenes', *Leeds International Classical Studies* 2 (2003), pp. 1-91 (p. 3).
[10] This etymology is disputed but seems most probable. Cf. Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of story* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 206.
[11] Gerard Genette, *Metalepse. De la figure à la fiction* (Paris, Seuil, 2004), p. 7. Translation by John Pier, 'Metalepsis', in *Handbook of Narratology,* ed. by Peter Hühn, Jan Christoph Meister, John Pier and Wolf Schmidt (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), p. 90.
[12] Diegesis derives from the Greek διήγησις (*narration* – cf. Luke 1:1) and is consistently contrasted with mimesis μίμησις (*imitation*). Cf. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 18, and Susan Sniader Lanser, *The narrative act: Point of view in prose fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 166.

told or presented by one of the characters within the primary diegesis then this separate embedded "story within a story" represents a further diegetic level. This level was termed *meta-diegesis* by Genette, but has since often been relabeled as *hypo-diegesis*.[13] The latter relabeling is preferable as it nominally subordinates embedded narrative to a level beneath the primary level. This matches typical reading experiences, for a reader is often aware that the world represented in the embedded tale belongs to and depends on the primary narrative, and that the narrator's own communication to the reader is experienced super-structurally and above the primary discourse.[14] In addition to the primary, hypo and extra diegetic layers, other commentators have since added the notion of a *trans-diegetic* structure which contains any voices that speak across each layer. Further characters, voices or themes that are present in each layer have been described as *omni-diegetic*.[15]



(Figure 1: A model of embedded narrative levels)

[13] Gérard Genette, *Narrative discourse revisited* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 84. Genette's approach is reversed by Mieke Bal and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan who both view the diegetic level as "subordinate" to the extradiegetic level. Cf. Mieke Bal, 'Narration et focalisation. Pour une théorie des instances du récit', *Poétique. Revue de Théorie et d'Analyse Littéraires Paris 29* (1977), pp. 21 – 58 (p. 35), and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, 'Narration: levels and voices', *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 86-105 (p. 93).

[14] Cf. Gérard, Genette, *Narrative discourse*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 228–29 and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* p. 92.

[15] 'Omni-diegesis' first appears in Sarah Atkinson's research on cinema audiences: Sarah Atkinson, 'The performative functions of dramatic communities: conceptualizing audience engagement in transmedia fiction', *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014), pp 2201-2219 (p. 2211). And 'Trans-diegesis' is first utilised by Catherine Wells, *Les métamorphoses narratologiques dans Chronique des sept misères et Solibo magnifique: une étude postclassique de Gérard Genette et de Patrick Chamoiseau* (Queen's University at Kingston, PhD diss., 2001), p. i.

A number of viable approaches to embedded narrative and diegetic frameworks have been offered in response to Genette's model (cf. section 5 below). Marie-Laure Ryan's model of "stacks" and Giovanni Battista Tomassini's notion of 'degrees of narrative delegation' are particularly noteworthy approaches.[16] Nevertheless a key virtue of Genette's analysis of narrative levels is that it focuses on the "threshold" between one spatiotemporal universe and another and the process of narration/story-telling as the boundary between these worlds. Later, moderate developments by Mieke Bal and William Nelles amongst others have also added depth to Genette's suggestion that the 'narrating situation' represented by each level includes the implicit time and person of the narrating voices, and that this 'narratorial situation' is fundamental to explanations of the inter-relation between different diegetic levels.[17] By definition narrative worlds can only exist through being read, and the act of narration is itself therefore an intrinsic aspect of the delineation between diegetic thresholds. As a consequence, to be meaningful, narrative theory must not look only at the internal mechanisms of a textual world, but also at the vocalising context which brings life to the narrative. Genette's model is therefore particularly significant, as his focus on narratological situation acknowledges that the interrelation of interior worlds is also simultaneously an interrelation between the world within the narrative and the (exterior) world of the reader: for the relationships between internal worlds are entirely latent until a narrative is narrated, read or heard.

Genette's notion of metalepsis, located as it is within a broader exploration of the thresholds between distinct narrative situations, has the potential to generate striking and significant consideration regarding the boundaries between reality and

[16] Cf. Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of story*, p. 23 and Giovanni Battista Tomassini, 'La mise en abyme', in *Il racconto nel racconto: analisi teorica dei procedimenti d'inserzione narrative,* ed. by Giovanni Battista Tomassini (Roma: Bulzoni 1990), pp. 106-112.
[17] Within his model Genette gives particular attention to the threshold between narrative levels.

representation that finds its nexus in narration.[18] Genette notes that texts require a degree of coherence in the function of their interior worlds and as a consequence boundaries between the implied universes of the extra, primary and hypo-diegeses normally contain a degree of rigidity. Without this a narrative will rarely achieve any semblance of sense, and consequently characters predominantly function only within their own situation, as this integrity is crucial for the development of a coherent story. Having highlighted the predominantly impermeable boundaries between diegetic layers Genette explains why the blurring of thresholds between interior worlds necessarily also confuses the relationship between reality and representation:

> The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis that the extra-diegetic is perhaps always diegetic and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative.[19]

Genette's approach is invaluable in that it highlights the intrinsic significance of metalepsis beyond the obvious blurring of thresholds between interior worlds. His emphasis on the narratorial situation highlights the fact that every transgression across diegetic thresholds is at the same time an ontological paradox: for whenever a voice or character is allowed to speak or act beyond the confines of their own diegetic world, the boundary that separates the 'represented world' from the 'real' is necessarily confused. For Genette this bleeding between worlds reveals the fragility of the "shifting sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells."[20] Genette implies that in some sense all worlds, including the readers' understanding of their own world, are narrative worlds dependent on

[18] Genette notes that the author is either hetero-diegetic (absent from the narrated world), homo-diegetic (present in the narrated world) or auto-diegetic (identical with the protagonist). These identity markers combined with the diegetic level (as explained above) lead to a four part typology of narrative stance. This focus has led a number of commentators to suggest that Genette's work is implicitly aspects of a speech act approach. Cf. Richard Shryock, *Tales of storytelling: embedded narrative in modern French fiction*, vol. 206, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1993).
[19] Genette, *Narrative discourse*, p. 236.
[20] *Loc. cit.*

and defined by levels of speech and acts of vocalisation, and that moments of metalepsis lay bare the fallacy inherent in attempts to divorce representations and realities.[21] Building upon Genette's model, others have helpfully explained metalepsis as a "confrontation of worlds" (David Lodge); a "short circuit" (Brian McHale); a "sudden collapse of the narrative system" (Werner Wolf); a "disruption in the fabric of the narrative" (Debra Malina); or a "strange loop" (Douglas Hofstadter).[22] Each of these approaches contribute nuance to understanding of the effect of frame-breaking, just as notions of transumption, intrusion, obtrusion, and narrative asides do. Nevertheless, metalepsis remains the best umbrella term and primary descriptor for moments that confuse narrative levels and frames because it is rooted in a useful broader model of diegetic layers and narrating situations, it is grounded within the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition and it connects with a wealth of narratological and philosophical background.[23] Metalepsis (and, by extension, Genette's model of diegesis) is therefore the primary prism through which I will consider and explore

[21] On the one hand, as in narrative fiction, a character can appeal directly to a reader, excluding the narrator and achieving a depth of pathos otherwise impossible. Conversely, the diegetic intrusion of the narrator's perspective, provenance, theology and voice introduce profound questions for the reader about the inspiration of the story or the validity of the narrative. In these metalepses demands are placed on the reader – for she becomes aware that she is reading, and any presumption of narrative objectivity or authorial authenticity is challenged. Rather than obfuscating the boundaries between reader and story, the intervention of explicit narrative presence bifurcates the reader from the story. This undermines the reader's capacity to remain distinct from the text and equally it undermines the text's capacity to speak cogently: for narration or performance necessarily contaminates the normal thresholds between layers of representations and reality.

[22] David Lodge, 'The modes of modem writing' in *Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 240; Brian McHale, *Postmodernist fiction,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and narrativity: A narratological reconceptualization and its applicability to the visual arts' in Word & Image 19, no. 3 (2003), pp. 180-197; Debra Malina, *Breaking the Frame: Metalepsis and the Construction of the Subject* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2002), p. 10; Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An eternal golden braid* (New York: Basic Books,1979).

[23] Quintilian's comments for example represent an interesting background regarding the ontological muddle inherent within metalepsis. He suggests that "it is an intermediate step, as it were, to that which is metaphorically expressed, signifying nothing in itself, but affording a passage to something. It is a trope that we give the impression of being acquainted with rather than one that we actually ever need." *Institutes of Oratory Book 8, Chapter 6*. Harold Bloom similarly suggests, "In a metalepsis, a word is substituted metonymically for a word in a previous trope, so that a metalepsis can be called, maddeningly but accurately, a metonymy of a metonymy." Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 102.

movements across textual thresholds which compromise the distinction between representation and reality via shifts in narratological stance, voice or spatiotemporality.

3. Examples in Biblical Narrative

Moments of direct appeal to the reader or encroachments between diegetic worlds may stretch a reader's cognitive limits and substantially affect the sense of connection that she perceives between her own world and the worlds within the text.[24] When a reader supposes that her own world shares a significant degree of correspondence with that portrayed in a narrated world, or if she accepts its veracity a priori, these effects may be even more pronounced. Metalepsis therefore carries the potential for amplified effect in texts which invite a presumption of correspondence between diegetic worlds. This is because moments of inconsistency in diegetic frames and transgressions across narrative boundaries draw attention to the divide between readerly reality and narrative representation. The effect of metalepsis on the believer reading scripture (or the reader believing scripture) may therefore be expected to be of particular significance: for contamination between logically distinct diegetic layers also encourages a reader to imagine a degree of permeability between the interlocking worlds of narration and reception. This sense of permeability may precipitate a depth of engagement which seems to be in tension with the suspicion provoked by diegetic inconsistency. However both effects can be

[24] For any reader, narrator or participant in the hermeneutical process 'she' is the pronoun of choice throughout this thesis, with 'he' reserved only for specific participants whom it would be historically anachronistic to refer to as 'she.' I am conscious that as a consequence biblical narrators are often referred to as 'he' with readers being 'she.' It is not my intention to imply a gender specific role through this nomenclature.

understood as facets of the honest, self-involved hermeneutic of which Ricoeur spoke:

> Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again… For the second immediacy that we seek and the second naiveté that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in a hermeneutics; we can believe only by interpreting.[25]

Unsurprisingly, presumptions about the coherence and authority of the biblical canon have often led to claims of a consistent and rigid narratorial stance and to models that downplay the frequency and significance of anomalous adjustments in narrative stance. Indeed, Janet Spittle has suggested that "No clear examples of metalepsis [in biblical narrative] comparable to the typical examples cited in modern novels come immediately to mind."[26] However, I fundamentally disagree with this analysis and contend that biblical narrative is replete with moments of metaleptic boundary breaking, the range of which is of profound effect upon the reader. I suggest that the frequency of metalepsis in biblical narrative produces a range of hermeneutically and theologically significant effects. It enhances the transmissibility of truth claims across the threshold between the world of the text and the world of the reader; it produces a portability of concepts despite the increasingly remote spatiotemporal location of the reader in relation to the world within the narrative; it invites readers to participate in an omni-diegetic reality that transcends the separation between distinct worlds; it destabilises a reader's sense of her relationship to the story-telling voice and provokes a new sense of situatedness. Indeed, it is my claim that metalepsis is one of the many features of biblical narrative that allows it to lay claim to the reader's reality and to shape the world of the text's reception. This extra-textual operability is

[25] Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 349.
[26] Janet E. Spittler, '"μανθάνεις πρὸς τίνας εἴρηται τὰ εἰρημένα;" Metalepsis in the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew' in *Über die Grenze: Metalepse in Text-und Bildmedien des Altertums* 39, ed. by Ute E. Eisen and Peter von Möllendorff (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 387–404 (p. 387).

of profound theological significance, as Mike Higton illustrates, for example, in a Christological context:

> The Gospel depiction of Jesus is not a fiction… Jesus is an insistent presence in our world – and our ways of seeing and of negotiating our world can't but be reshaped by that presence.[27]

In Chapters 3-6 I offer close readings of four very different moments of metalepsis in biblical narrative, in Mark 13, Luke 16, across the Deuteronomistic History and in Job 19. The survey that follows in this section is therefore merely an illustration of the frequency of metaleptic moments within biblical narratives and the range of such occurrences. Despite the absence of any other similar surveys and the scarcity of articles exploring biblical metalepsis, it is my claim that there is a sufficient range of diegetic transgressions within biblical narrative to suggest that instances in Job 19:23, Mark 13:14, Luke 16:8 and within the Deuteronomistic History are part of a broader pattern. The following survey suggests that the frequency of occurrences justifies closer examination, and supports the claim that metalepsis is a significant feature of biblical narrative. There are many more examples than those which I offer, and here I have selected a limited range of metalepses that illustrate the most interesting range of transgressions within the interrelationships between the role of the narrator, the world of the primary diegesis and that of the reader.

3.1 The destabilising introduction of I, We and Us

Narrators normally inhabit a consistent relationship with the space-time of their story. Indeed Genette explained the relationship as one of the fundamental aspects of

[27] Mike Higton, foreword to *The Identity of Jesus Christ, Expanded and Updated Edition: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology*, by Hans W. Frei (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), p. xviii.

narratological typology.[28] The narrator does not usually deviate from her stance which must either be *hetero-diegetic* (situated in a different place and time from her tale, and therefore absent from the narrated world as a character); *homo-diegetic* (situated within the story as a character or a voice that interacts with other characters) or *auto-diegetic* (operating with an indistinguishable voice to that of the protagonist).

These classifications describe the narrator's stance apropos the story that she narrates. The majority of biblical narrative is recounted from a hetero-diegetic stance, as demonstrated in the typical narrative structures found between Genesis and Chronicles:

> When Ahab saw Eli'jah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD"… So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel, and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. (I Kings 18:17-20)

Less commonly biblical narrators adopt a homo-diegetic stance, in which, whilst not the protagonist of the story, they themselves appear as witnesses to events, as in Luke-Acts:

> And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Pat'ara. And having found a ship crossing to Phoeni'cia, we went aboard, and set sail. When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria. (Acts 21:1-12)

Equally infrequent are occasions when narrators describe their own interactions, and as the primary character within the narrative, adopt an auto-diegetic stance. This approach is evident in the book of Nehemiah, and in introductions to a number of prophetic narratives:

[28] This focus has led a number of commentators to suggest that models based on diegetic thresholds are implicitly aspects of a speech act approach. Cf. Shryock, *Tales of storytelling*, p. 33.

> In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Ar-ta-xerx'es, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing else but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. (Nehemiah 2:1-2.)[29]

Movement between these stances is unusual in narratives because a consistent relationship between the narrative voice and the narration is fundamental to the coherence of the narrative.[30] An auto-diegetic narrator, for example, would not be expected to offer an omniscient comment related to events unfolding within the narrative as this would confuse substantially the reader's sense of perspective regarding the narrative framework. Similarly it would be very strange for a hetero-diegetic narrator to interact with a character, as her location has previously been distinct from that of the characters she describes. On occasions when a narrator steps outside of her normal mode of narration, such anachronistic movement therefore often functions as a significant challenge to a reader's understanding of the layers within the narrative or to her sense of her own relatedness to the narrative.

Within the corpus of biblical narratives there are a number of examples that illustrate precisely the change of stance explained above. Such unexpected narratological incursions tangle diegetic planes and complicate the relationship between the narrator and the narrative. Some of these instances occur in prescripts or postscripts, and only minimally affect the reader's sense of the relationship between the narrator and the narrative. These self-referential inclusions at the beginning or end of a text achieve various effects, but primarily the intermingling of the world of the story and the story-teller serves as an attempt to validate the

[29] Cf. Francois Tolmie, *Narratology and Biblical narratives: a practical guide* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), p. 19.
[30] An exception to this rule is the role of the 'unreliable narrator', a style that first drew my attention to narratological paradox. Cf. Sebastian Faulks' *Engleby*, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* or Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

authenticity and honesty of the narrative voice.[31] Such statements of introduction or conclusion are technically defined as *colophons*, examples of which include 2 Maccabees (where the narrative voice intervenes near the beginning of the narrative), and John 21 (where a comparable intervention occurs at the end of the Gospel):

> All this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book. For considering the flood of numbers involved and the difficulty there is for those who wish to enter upon the narratives of history because of the mass of material, we have aimed to please those who wish to read, to make it easy for those who are inclined to memorize, and to profit all readers. (2 Macc. 2:25)
>
> Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:25)

Because scribal addenda found in colophons muddle the relationship between the primary diegesis and what would, in a modern publication, be a title page, preface or postscript, the effect on the narrative as a whole is limited. Indeed, according to Genette such instances are part of a narrative paratext which establishes a "contract of reading" and which represent a discursive threshold that he explains as "a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy."[32] Genette sees the movement between narrative stance in an epigrammatic introduction as an anticipated aspect of the "original authorial preface", which explains why the narrative that follows deserves to be read. Content such as titles, prefaces or notes, "have the capacity to inflect the way we read and interpret a

[31] Though this effect is not necessarily achieved, since making a reader suddenly aware that they are being told a story may have the effect of 'laying bare' the device and increasing their distance from the text (see section 5 below).

[32] Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean, 'Introduction to the Paratext', *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991), pp. 261-272 (p. 2). Note also that Genette defines as 'Peritext' material which appears "within the same volume".

narrative" but do not confuse the structure significantly.[33] They should therefore not be considered metaleptic.

Conversely, moments that inexplicably, unexpectedly or anachronistically introduce the presence of the narrator into the main events within the narrative world are much more destabilising. Such incursions create obvious transgressions that cannot be explained as redactional discrepancies caused by the juxtaposition of colophon and narrative, text and postscript, or title page and story. Jeremiah's dictation to Baruch, which occurs near the middle of the book, is an example of precisely such an interruption. It muddles narrative thresholds and brings into focus questions of textual provenance:

> Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him. (Jer. 36:5)

The intrusion here of a description of the process of the textualisation of the narrative interrupts the previous sense that the text was a verbatim record of Jeremiah's words, yet still suggests that the world of the narrator is entirely synonymous with that of Jeremiah. The description of the dictation therefore creates a paradox, for it is clear that the act of writing is being written about, which means that the narrative being read is not actually a record of Jeremiah's words. This confusion is compounded by the description of Jehoi'akim's decision to burn the scroll and of Jeremiah's decision to dictate a second time:

> Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neri'ah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll which Jehoi'akim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them. (Jer. 36:32)

[33] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge introduction to narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 239.

For this paradox to be resolved, the reader is left with two equally strange possibilities. Either a normally hetero-diegetic voice has here included autobiographical detail or else the words in the biblical book of Jeremiah are not the dictation written now by Baruch. Thus the involvement of the scribe within the primary diegesis profoundly muddles the sense of relatedness between the identity of a scribe and that of the narrative voice.[34]

Beyond the references to the scribal works of Baruch an array of adjustments in narrative stance within the text of Jeremiah produce a significant sense of contamination between storytelling thresholds.[35] For example the narrative voice moves between the first and third person (and consequently from an auto-diegetic to a hetero-diegetic narrative stance) in a number of key oracles:

> The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah, “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel? (Jer. 3.6).
>
> The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah concerning the drought (Jer. 14.1).

Furthermore, minor insertions also suggest that there are a number of layers of hypo-diegesis within the text, each embedded and demarcated by the faintest of thresholds:

> Woe to you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh is undone; for your sons have been taken captive, and your daughters into captivity. Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, says the LORD." *Thus far is the judgment on Moab.* Concerning the Ammonites. Thus says the LORD: "Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? (Jer. 48.46 – 49:1).
>
> Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Serai'ah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, and… When

[34] Cf. Jack R. Lundbom, ‘Baruch, Seraiah, and Expanded Colophons in the Book of Jeremiah’, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 11, no. 36 (1986), pp. 89-114.
[35] Haim Gvaryahu suggests that the book of Jeremiah alone contains more than 40 colophons. Haim Gvaryahu, *Biblical Colophons: A Source for the “Biography” of Authors, Texts and Books* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1975), pp. 42-59.

> you finish reading this book, bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphra'tes, and say, `Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the evil that I am bringing upon her.'" *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.* Zedeki'ah was twenty-one years old when he became king; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. (Jer. 51.60 – 52:1).

Inconsistent narratorial stance is a feature of the book of Jeremiah and it provokes a range of fairly small interpretative dilemmas for the reader. However, these instances accumulate to the point where they destabilise the reader's sense of whose words they are reading and they highlight the competing claims for primacy made by YHWH's, Jeremiah's and Baruch's voices, neither one nor the other ever being allowed security as principle interlocutor.

Nevertheless, the prophetic mantle is marked above all else within the Hebrew canon through the introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord" (*ko 'amar 'adonai*), and biblical prophecy is understood to demand a degree of "rhetorical ventriloquism."[36] Consequently the movement between the voice of the prophet and YHWH is anticipated and the inconsistency in narrative stance does not threaten to overwhelm the coherence of the narrative. Readers still feel like they are readers, and the narrative still feels like narrative: substantive ontological shift or contamination between the reader's world and the intra-diegetic worlds is therefore limited. This situation is best understood as "a temporary breach of illusion that does not threaten the basic structure of the narrative universe."[37] The transitions may lay bare the illusion of the represented world, and the nature of the narrative voice may be confused, but even if its authority is questioned, the role of the reader is undisturbed.

[36] Cf. Ruth Finnegan, *Why do we quote?: the culture and history of quotation* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2011), p. 234.
[37] Ryan, *Avatars of story,* p. 207.

More overt metaleptic strangeness is evident in the transition between the hetero-diegetic and homo-diegetic narration in the 'we passages' in Luke-Acts. The first transition from the third person voice to the first is found in Acts 16:

> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedo'nia was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedo'nia and help us." *And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedo'nia*, *concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them*. (Acts 16:9-10)

Other similar transitions are found in 20:4-5 where the narrator, without explanation becomes part of Paul's entourage in Philippi before sailing with him to Troas, and in 27:1-2 where the narrator becomes a participant in Paul's voyage towards shipwreck in Malta.[38] The movement from a hetero- to a homo-diegetic stance has generated prodigious comment, with particularly noteworthy recent insights offered by William S. Campbell, Hannah M. Cocksworth, Anja Cornils and Ute E. Eisen. Campbell explains:

> The shift in grammatical person in these passages presents interpretative problems because the narrator does not provide an explanation for the change and the reason is not obvious from the narrative context, that is, the narrator does not say that at these points he has entered events personally, nor does the story itself suggest that this is the case.[39]

Cocksworth notes that this unexpected movement "changes the voice and point of view of the narrator, and consequently the sense of narrative distance felt by the implied reader."[40] Cornils' major suggestion is that metalepsis in ancient literature, such as Acts, was a serious technique that was not employed for comic or anti-illusionistic effects (as is often the case in modern narrative), but rather as a means

[38] Ute E Eisen, 'Metalepsis in the Gospel of John–Narration Situation and "Beloved Disciple" in New Perspective', in *Über die Grenze: Metalepse in Text-und Bildmedien des Altertums* 39, ed. by Ute E. Eisen and Peter von Möllendorff (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 318 – 345 (p. 325).
[39] William S. Campbell, *The "We" passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The narrator as narrative character* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), p. 1.
[40] Hannah May Cocksworth, *Beginnings, endings, and the narrative unity of Luke and Acts* (University of Cambridge PhD diss., 2014), p. 22.

for increasing the narrator's authority and intensifying the credibility of the narrative.[41] To this end, she suggests that in Acts the "we" passages serve an exclusively rhetorical effect that is intended to enhance the credibility of the account. Ute E. Eisen adds to this notion commenting:

> [The first person plural "we" narrative passages] remain incidental because they are interrupted by the main third-person-narration… but the effect on the reader is tremendous [and] there are still interpreters who read Luke-Acts as written by an eyewitness.[42]

The lack of explanation within Luke-Acts regarding the movement between the hetero-diegetic and homo-diegetic narrative stance suggests that the narrative is a blend of personal experience and citation of other accounts. Whether this is because the narrative is an account that 'accidently' mixes these two forms, or whether these metalepses are deliberate rhetorical tools intended to increase the persuasive power of the text is a moot point. In either case the adjustment in narrative voice is noticeable, sudden, unexplained and initially illogical.

For the sake of this initial survey one final example of a shift in narratorial stance from a hetero to homo-diegetic position will suffice. For the overwhelming majority of John's Gospel, and for the rest of the prologue of which this verse is a part, the narrative voice in John is hetero-diegetic and speaks dispassionately in the third person. Indeed the strongest confessions of faith in the Gospel come from the personal testimony of characters in the primary diegesis. For example, Thomas in John 20:28, "My Lord and My God"; the man born blind in John 9:38, "Lord, I believe"; the woman at the well in John 4:28 "Come and see a man who told me

[41] Anja Cornils, 'La métalepse dans les Actes des Apôtres: un signe de narration fictionnelle?' in *Métalepses. Entorses au pacte de la représentation* ed. by John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, (Paris: Édition de l'EHESS, 2005), pp. 95-107.

[42] Eisen, 'Metalepsis in the Gospel of John', p. 325. Cf. Warren S. Smith, 'We-Passages in Acts as Mission Narrative', in *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative*, ed. by Marilia P. Futre Pinheiro, Judith Perkins and Richard Pervo (Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 2012), pp. 171 – 188.

everything I have ever done!"; and Peter in John 6:69, "you are the Holy One of God." Nevertheless, before any of these confessions, in John 1:14, the narrator locates himself as part of a witnessing community.[43]

> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:14)

Through use of the first person plural pronoun, in this rare instance an otherwise omniscient and hetero-diegetic voice is located within the same space-time dimensions as the primary diegesis, a movement that confounds the otherwise untroubled boundary that keeps the world of the narrative, the world of the narrator and that of the narratee remote from one another. This movement achieves significant rhetorical effect, for the first person plural "we" invites the reader to situate herself with the narrator amongst the community of those who have seen the glory of the Word, and to allow her own identity to be immersed in the primary diegesis.[44]

In a number of different ways in Jeremiah, Luke-Acts and John, movements between a hetero-diegetic and homo-diegetic narrative stance and the shift in perspective from "he" and "they" to "I" and "we" demonstrate an inconsistent application of narratorial identity. This destabilisation of the normative boundaries

[43] Cf. Herman Ridderbos, 'The Structure and Scope of the Prologue to the Gospel of John', *Novum Testamentum 8* (1966), pp. 180-201. Ridderbos cites John 1:14 as evidence of the role of the narrator as eye witness: "It has been correctly pointed out again and again that a change of persons takes place here. No longer are 'those who received Him' spoken of in the third person, but rather now in the first person: "We beheld Him". (p. 195). For the broader context of John 1:14 see Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the exegetical and theological background of John's prologue* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 82.

[44] Cf. Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, *The print's first kiss: A rhetorical investigation of the implied reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988). Staley notes that this instance is one among many that reveals a rhetorical strategy ensuring that "the implied reader and narratee share so much of the same narrative territory" (p. 47). Ridderbos also comments on the significance of shared witness: "'Seeing' or 'beholding' has a very specific significance, and the mention of it corresponds with what the evangelist at the close of his book indicates to have been the purpose for all his writing… It is with the mention of this incarnation and of this "we" that the evangelist seeks the transition to his narrative." Ridderbos, *Structure and Scope,* p. 195.

between primary and extra-diegesis provokes the reader (to varying degrees in each example) toward a reconsideration of her own role.[45]

3.2 The Apocalyptic Subsummation of the Seer

Apocalyptic texts almost universally adopt a first-person mode of narration offering a clear point of view and unambiguous extra-diegetic stance, in part because the veracity of the vision depends on the authority and authenticity of the seer.[46] It is of fundamental significance to all biblical apocalypse that the narrated vision is believed to have genuinely been seen rather than creatively constructed, and emphatic narrative self-authentication helps to legitimise the seer's identity without his own persona becoming a subject of any focus. Ezekiel's vision is a good example of the overt role of the seer, and the natural place of the apocalyptic visionary in the foreground of the narrative:

> In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God…The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. (Ezekiel 1:1 and 3:14)

Susan Lanser has suggested overt contextual and narratological identity markers help to establish a clear "point of view [that] conditions and codetermines the reader's response in the text," and I would suggest that this is nowhere more obvious than in apocalyptic visions.[47] The following examples demonstrate that it is not only Ezekiel who typifies the auto-diegetic first-person singular stance that is such a significant feature of apocalyptic texts:

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[45] A similar effect may be evident in I John 4:9: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us," and 2 Peter 1:16: "we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."
[46] Cf. James L. Resseguie, *Revelation unsealed: A narrative critical approach to John's Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
[47] Lanser, *The narrative act,* p. 7.

> Then I Daniel looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. (Daniel 12:5)
>
> And I, Enoch, I alone saw the likeness of the end of all things. Nor did any human being see it, as I saw it. (I Enoch 19:3)
>
> But I, Simon Peter, and Andrew my brother, took our nets and went unto the sea: and there was with us Levi the son of Alphaeus. (GosP 15:60)

A great deal has been written about the effects of this style of narration, including the recurring observation that the first person singular point of view in apocalyptic narrative renders personal and believable that which was previously unbridgeably remote. Richard Bauckham has devoted considerable attention to the effects of the first-person 'stereotypical formulae of apocalyptic vision', and the self-involving demands that are placed upon the reader through such formulae have also been discussed by Marcus Bockmuehl.[48] James Resseguie, focusing particularly upon narrative strategy in Revelation, has further suggested that the point of view apparent in the text invites the reader to "stand where John stands and to see what John sees."[49] This is a theme significantly and articulately developed by David De Silva, who also comments on the audience's obligation to see things John's way:

> Having opened up this book… its world and its inhabitants rush out into our world invading our normal reality. We don't know quite how to put the two worlds together, and we start looking for the beast, or the prostitute, or the beast's mark, or the falling star "Wormwood" in the world around us…. How do we make sense of this book living in *our* world?[50]

I would not begin to challenge the suggestion that the point of view, and narratorial stance represented in apocalyptic visions, condition responses and add authenticity

[48] Richard Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), p. 178. Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 21, 46 and 64. The vast historic footprint of apocalyptic literature demonstrates the extent to which readers engaged within the broad horizon of expectation created by the apocalyptic narrator and have believed that the vision unveiled represents not only a textual universe, but also representation of an invisible reality. Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 12.
[49] Resseguie, *Revelation unsealed*, p. 3.
[50] David A. De Silva, *Seeing things John's way: The rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2009), p. 2.

to the narrated visions; nevertheless I would suggest that authentication is not the only purpose of the stylised use of the first person voice. The first person stance of such narratives is also fundamental to the transmission and reception of the seer's vision. In theory, the seer's voice within the text ought to operate as the primary diegesis. After all it is the John, Enoch or Daniel whom the reader first encounters and who appeal directly to their audience through an overt narrative act directed toward the reader in their first person testimonies:

> I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (Revelation 1:9-10)
>
> I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. (Revelation 22:8-9)

The visions of heaven within apocalyptic texts are therefore essentially embedded narratives, and the first person perspective is fundamental to grounding the apocalyptic visions within the world of the actual that is shared by the visionary narrator and the reader. The art of apocalypse, however, is to acknowledge the story-teller without allowing them to become the focus of the text, and thereby to foreground their vision. Throughout Revelation for example, the visions of heaven are so exceptionally vivid, and the world of the seer so remarkably transparent, that the reader experiences the hypo-diegetic (embedded) narrative of heaven as the primary diegesis and the primary diegetic world of the exiled prophet becomes a broadly irrelevant layer of extra-diegesis.

The reader knows that John "was on the island called Patmos" (1:9) but this reality is soon subsumed by the sensory overload depicted in John's sonorous,

luminescent, fragrant vision of heaven.[51] The prayers of the saints (5:8), the noise of the trumpets (8:7) and the radiance of the New Jerusalem (21:11) wrestle for primacy in a depiction of heaven that entirely outshines John's first-century context. The effect of this is to relegate the role of the seer. John's own context 'in the spirit', 'on the Lord's day', 'a brother', 'on the island of Patmos' becomes a fragile continuum, portrayed with deliberately minimalistic detail and his role becomes contiguous with that of the reader, so that it feels as though John inhabits the same world as the reader and both are witnessing the startlingly lucid reality of heaven.

It is not that the role of the seer is entirely removed from the narrative framework, to the contrary, apart from the "I, John" of 1:9 and 22:8, the first person narrative voice also interrupts the primary diegesis on eighty-five other occasions with reference to his own situation. On thirty-nine of these occasions John narrates, "I saw," on twenty-four "I heard," on eight "I looked." John fell three times; was told and was in the Spirit twice; marvelled, said, took, turned, went, was given and wept once.[52] The proliferation of such frequent and overt first person constructions ensure that the presence of the seer is felt keenly by the reader of Revelation. Indeed Erasmus famously complained that John's repeated self-inclusion drew attention to his own persona rather than that of Christ, and could not therefore, have been written by a genuine apostle.[53] I draw a quite different conclusion from Erasmus and suspect that John's understanding of the vision he received provoked a profoundly altered sense of self-understanding and an awareness of his significance as a story-teller. It was John's transformed sense of referentiality rather than unbridled ego

[51] Cf. Andrew Byers, *TheoMedia: The Media of God and the Digital Age* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), p. 208.
[52] A similar frequency is found in I Enoch, where the narrator says that "I saw" one hundred and four times.
[53] Cf. Irena Backus, 'The Church Fathers and the Canonicity of the Apocalypse in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3, (1998), pp. 651-66 (p. 653).

which led to the self-referential narrative frame of the apocalypse. This is a process Werner Jeanrond has also identified in hermeneutics:

> Textual understanding is now also self-criticism; this is so because in order to understand, the reader must open her/ himself to the text. Reading introduces me to the imaginative variation of the ego. The metamorphosis of the world in play is also the metamorphosis of the ego.[54]

It is my contention that the overt presence of the first-person seer within apocalyptic texts is not ultimately or exclusively an appeal to the reader to believe the authority of the seer, for the frequency of intrusion confounds this end. Rather the repeated presence of the "I" within the vision invites the reader to see the spatiotemporal location they share with the narrator entirely absorbed into the reality of the heavenly realm. Indeed the act of apocalyptic narration is an endeavour to persuade readers that their own location, like that of the seer's, is subordinate to the picture of heaven within the text. Each narratorial intrusion amplifies the feeling that the narrator's world is an embedded and subsidiary aspect of the envisioned universe, rather than the other way round. Apocalyptic narrative routinely inverts the narrative frame, so that John, and other apocalyptic seers, seem themselves to be contained within the prodigious, vast reality of the heavenly universe, which is itself entirely too colossal, vivid and real to be adequately accommodated in an embedded narrative.

In some sense then in Revelation, diegetic contamination allows the reader to feel as though they occupy the same fragile, permeable liminal space as John, a reality that is itself absorbed into the fullness of heaven where Jesus sees all, rather than the other way round. This inversion of readerliness is exemplified in Jesus' first person address to John:

[54] Werner G. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, trans. by Thomas J. Wilson (New York: Crossroad Press, 1988), p. 54.

> Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end… I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. (Revelation 22:12-16).

This is a masterpiece of diegetic reduction in which multifarious narrative levels are collapsed into one framework. The reader does not at first feel as though she is reading a written account, narrated by a remote voice, recalling a distant moment of profound epiphany remembered, digested and retold. Rather, what is written penetrates the layers of telling and hearing and allows the voices of heaven directly to address, challenge and comfort readers. Through metaleptic transgressions of normal narrative frames the reader feels that it is the world of Patmos, rather than of heaven, that is an embedded hypo-diegesis within a larger reality.

Additionally the "I Jesus... I John" symmetry within the narrative also contributes to the metaleptic motion that repositions the reader from a spectator role: for the threshold of Jesus' address to the church, and John's address to his readers are blended in the interchangeability of their locutionary form. Significantly the audience is moved from imagining that they are an extra-diegetic audience ("Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear." 1:3) to perceiving themselves with John, as spectators of the heavenly reality, auditors of its conversations and participants in its promises.[55] Because the vision is so much more vivid than the frame, the framework that the reader and the narrator seem to inhabit has disappeared, and rather like Borro del Casso's boy escaping criticism (4.3 below), the apocalyptic vision reaches directly into the reader's world. The beasts, prostitutes, angels and saints seek to lay hold of the voyeur and drag his

[55] Michael Benton's exploration of the role of the spectator is invaluable in consideration of this shift. Michael Benton, *Studies in the Spectator Role: Literature, Painting, and Pedagogy* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 12-14.

world into their own frame. We do not get the sense that John wants us in Patmos with him, but that Jesus wants us and John transported into his heavenly reality:

> The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)

Apocalypse is essentially a mode of narration whereby the seer's presence in the primary diegesis is obscured by the lucidity of their vision. Equally, what is essentially an embedded hypo-diegesis is elevated to the point that the presence of the seer disappears and his role as a mediator between the reader and the realities of heavenly realm is obscured beneath the vividness of the hypo-diegetic world. Apocalyptic visions such as those explored above are masterpieces of metalepsis. They place demands upon readers through contaminating normal diegetic hierarchies and implying the subsummation of the reader's reality into the primacy of the heavenly.

3.3 Anomalous Abbreviations in Direct Speech

In this brief overview a final category of diegetic muddle may be noted in the contaminations between the narrative comments and the direct speech of characters that seem to occur unintentionally in occasional moments of abbreviation within the primary diegesis. Use of dialogue to describe action is a characteristic of much narrative within the Hebrew Bible, for the transposition of overt narrative direction into direct speech allows plot to develop with a degree of immediacy and a minimum of extra-diegetic intervention.[56] In such narrative a character's speech is rarely intended to appear naturalistic. However, occasionally in what is purported to be direct speech, the narrator includes an anachronistic abbreviation that the character

[56] Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 111.

could not, or would not have spoken. These instances may be intended to avoid the repetition of direct speech between multiple characters, but through their phrasing these moments blur the distinction between the voice of the narrator and the characters of whom he talks. The effect of this is to reveal that direct speech within the primary diegetic plane is an extension of the extra-diegetic voice and thus, momentarily, the captivating spell of the narrative is broken.

The most obvious example of this narratological intrusion into the direct speech of a character is the unusual Hebrew phrase *ploni almoni*, which occurs only three times in the Old Testament and is best translated as “such and such” or “so and so.”[57] In each of the three biblical examples the phrase rescues the narrative from the inclusion of a further repetition or the insertion of unnecessary or unknown detail. However, it does not make sense in any of the three circumstances, for in each instance the character who is speaking could not have abridged his own phrase in such a manner. Consequently in each occurrence *ploni almoni* reads like the intrusion of the extra-diegetic structure into the primary diegetic dialogue. The three examples are found in 1 Samuel 21:2, 2 Kings 6:8 and Ruth 4:1.

> And David said to Ahim'elech the priest, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, `Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the young men for *such and such a place”* (1 Sam 21:2-3).
>
> Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, "At *such and such a place* shall be my camp" (2 Kings 6:8).

[57] CF. Charles J. Ellicott, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume III, I Kings – Esther* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2016), p. 269. For Cosideration of *ploni almoni* see George Dargo, ‘Deriving Law from the Biblical Narrative: The Book of Ruth’*, New England Law Review 40*, no. 2 (2005-2006), pp. 351-361. “The unnamed Ploni Almoni (a “Mr. So and So”) is, in other words, a “John Doe” (p. 356).

> And Bo'az went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the next of kin, of whom Bo'az had spoken, came by. So Bo'az said, "Turn aside, sit down here *so and so*" (Ruth 4:1).

The value of *ploni almoni* in each narrative is obvious. In 1 Samuel David's speech would require the invention of a destination, in 2 Kings the non-specificity of 'such and such a place' allows the unnecessary detail of a Syrian king's conversation to be avoided and in Ruth, 'so and so' saves the narrator from having to offer or invent a previously nameless relative and from repeating the extended and entangled description of the relative's role found a few verses earlier:

> And now it is true that I am a near kinsman, yet there is a kinsman nearer than I… if he will do the part of the next of kin for you, well; let him do it; but if he is not willing to do the part of the next of kin for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will do the part of the next of kin for you. (Ruth 3:12-13)

One further example of an anachronistic abbreviation is evident in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife where the narrator, having twice already employed the voice of Potiphar's wife to report a fictitious account of Joseph's sexual assault, at the third time of telling simply says, "things of this sort your slave did to me" (Gen 39:19). Given that the tale has already been repeated to Potiphar and his servants, the narrator has no need in verse 19 to repeat once more the lengthy allegation of attempted sexual assault. Potiphar's wife's speech is truncated in the same way that Boaz, the Syrian king and David's are, for the sake of narrative momentum.

I have found no commentary that pays attention to these anachronisms, and this is no surprise given that each example, taken on its own, seems like an isolated disturbance of the diegetic surface. Nevertheless, it is interesting that many English translations struggle to accommodate these anomalies. Instead translations tend to naturalize character's speech, obscuring the haemorrhage between the narrator and characters' voices, and allowing the characters to say what we expect them to say:

> David answered Ahimelek the priest, “The king sent me on a mission and said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.’ As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place (1 Sam 21:2, *New International Version*).
>
> The king of Aram was at war with Israel. He talked things over with his officers. Then he said, “I'm going to set up my camp in a certain place” (2 Kings 6:8, *New Century Translation*).
>
> No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So Boaz said, "Come over, friend; sit down here." And he went over and sat down (Ruth 4:1, *Revised Standard Version*).

These endeavours attempt to reduce the ‘strangeness’ of metalepsis and illustrate the challenge that such threshold transgressions produce for the reader. In the examples above metaleptic abbreviation across diegetic planes helps the narrator to avoid a potentially clumsy, unhelpful, tangential and convoluted hypo-diegesis. However, the reader’s sense of the apparent omniscience of the narrator is disturbed, the validity of the narrative as a representation of reality is confused and the legitimacy of the parameters and thresholds around the story-telling voice are confounded. If even direct speech can be truncated by the extra-diegetic story-teller, and the narrator intrudes to speak through the voice of a character a question is provoked: “Who is really telling whom what?”

4. Thresholds between Reality and Representation

Whilst the previous section examined a brief selection of biblical metalepses, latterly a range of publications have collated a profound breadth of transmedial examples of metalepsis.[58] There are a wide range of boundary breaking movements within and

[58] Cf. Werner Wolf, ‘Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial Phenomenon’ in E*xporting Narratological concepts, Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality, Disciplinarity*, ed. by Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt and Wilhelm Schernus (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 83-108.

across narrative, poetics and art which may all be metaleptic, and yet each are explained through differences in nomenclature and foci according to the diverse specialisms and interests of the critics who first employed them rather than any irreconcilable meta-critical differences. Thus potentially useful lenses upon the paradoxical contamination of layers within a text may be discovered in analysis of a number of analogous and overlapping concepts which are sometimes competitors with the idea of metalepsis, and are at other times complementary.

Whilst Genette's theory and terminology underpin my exploration of narrative thresholds within the biblical text, the profound breadth of metaleptic effects may also be explained and described through examination of *Apostrophe* that surfaces in the ancient rhetorical traditions*, Engaging Apostrophes* popularised in Victorian novels, movements that *Break the Fourth Wall* in dramaturgy, and *visual illusion* in art, notably in Trompe-l'œil, surrealism and the modern transgressive movement.[59] I suggest that narrative apostrophes, dramatic performances that break the fourth wall and visual illusions can all be considered metaleptic devices, for each carries the capacity to significantly transgress the normative boundaries between reality and

[59] There are of course equally fascinating examples of metalepsis in other media and discourses, but to review these in depth would be pleonastic and would not add to the breadth of illustration in this chapter. The breadth that could be considered is demonstrable through brief allusion to examples of computer games, film and live performance: The 1990 PC game Virtual Valerie is the standout computing example. In this game making a negative choice within a game caused a user's computer to reboot. Cinema productions from earliest to most recent often include metalepsis, for example in Charlie Chaplin's 1914, *Kids Auto Races in Venice*, Chaplin's character notices whenever he is about to leave the frame of a long pan shot, and repeatedly repositions himself to make sure he remains the centre of attention, and in Deadpool (2016) the protagonist looks at the camera and says, "A 4th-wall break inside a 4th-wall break… That's like, 16 walls!" In live performance of the band Gorrillaz, animation, holograph and film are consistently muddled trans-medially. On Virtual Valerie, cf. Joseph Thompson, 'Games, Glitches, Ghosts: Giving Voice to Enchantment in the Gamic Assemblage' in *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge & Society* 8, no. 5 (2012), and Julian Hanebeck, *Understanding Metalepsis: The Hermeneutics of Narrative Transgression* Vol. 56 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), p. 78. On Chaplin see Nathaniel Davis, '"Not a soul in sight!" Beckett's Fourth Wall' in *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 2 (2015), pp. 86-102. On Deadpool see Christina Dokou, 'Karin Kukkonen, Contemporary Comics Storytelling', *European Journal of American studies* (2016), pp. 3-9. On live performances and visual illusion see Roberta Hofer, 'Metalepsis in Live Performance: Holographic Projections of the Cartoon Band "Gorillaz" as a Means of Metalepsis' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. by Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 232-251.

represented or narrated levels. Each should be considered auxiliary to the notion of metalepsis, for each represents a limited form of frame-breaking, whereas Genette's model of metalepsis refers to any transgression across narrative levels and includes a sense of the paradoxical disturbance. *Narrative Apostrophe* defines only those moments when the voice of the narrator or character alters the focus of his or her discourse and addresses a different person or object directly with a second person pronoun. *Engaging Apostrophes* are a further subset: those apostrophes aimed directly at the audience from a first person narrator. *Breaking the Fourth Wall* defines only those moments in narrative performance when the delineation between the narrative act and the audience (the invisible fourth wall of the stage) is momentarily dissolved. *Visual Illusion* applies only to movements between spatial dimensions which through a 'trick of the eye' destabilises a viewer's sense of the threshold between realities.[60] Metalepsis therefore remains the best term to describe the overarching boundary breaking paradigm, but, without diminishing Genette's model of the inter-relation of thresholds, the following examples of apostrophes, drama and illusion are transmedial indicators of the significance of frame-breaking processes. These examples are therefore employed to demonstrate something of the range of movements between diegetic levels across a breadth of forms and to illustrate some of the effects caused by the contamination or confusion between levels of reality and representation. They diverge significantly from the biblical examples that follow and illustrate a breadth of the applications and effects of metalepsis and similar devices that transgress the threshold between representation and reality.

[60] Werner Wolf has argued that in instances of aesthetic illusion the boundary breaking process is entirely psychological and occurs in the viewer's mind. Werner Wolf, 'Aesthetic illusion as an effect of fiction', *Style* 38 no. 3 (2004), pp. 325-350.

4.1 Greco-Roman Rhetoric

The origins of deliberate diegetic contamination may be clearly traced in ancient texts, where the rhetorical effect of narrative frame-breaking was discussed and developed in detail. In classical literature, transgression of the normal boundaries between the world of the narrator or characters within the text is most notable when the narrator turns aside from the primary discourse and offers exclamatory address to an absent character, a being or object beyond the discourse, or even to the audience.[61] These direct appeals were classified by rhetoricians as *apostrophe*, from the Greek term to 'turn away from'. This change of stance from discourse about a third person ('he', 'she' or sometimes 'it') to address a second person (you) was praised by ancient commentators for its capacity to effect a complementary turning amongst an audience. Quintilian, for example, suggested that the apostrophe was "strangely moving" and that it "invites questions from hearers."[62] Longinus theorised similarly that the apostrophe converted the audience from 'listeners' to 'participants'. Whilst commenting on a speech of Demosthenes he suggests that through use of apostrophe Demosthenes "carries his hearers away with him."[63] Both Quintilian and Longinus were thus firm advocates for the use of apostrophe as a rhetorical or narrative device, and each (without explaining how they thought this worked) offered numerous examples of the evocative and mysterious pathos achieved by this device.[64] Quintilian classified various forms of apostrophe common at the time and explained the figure of speech as follows:

[61] The apostrophe originated in the rhetoric of an orator turning away the judges of the court to address "his adversary, a specific member of the jury, someone absent or dead, or even an abstract concept." Cf. Irene Kacandes, 'Narrative Apostrophe: Reading, Rhetoric, Resistance in Michel Butor's "La modification" and Julio Cortázar's "Graffiti"', *Style* 28 no. 3(1994), pp. 329-349 (p. 332).
[62] Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, Book 9, Chapter 3:88.
[63] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, Chapter 34:9.
[64] Longinus *On the Sublime*, Chapter 34:200-05.

> *Apostrophe* [is another trope which] does not affect the sense, but only the form of an expression. Whether they arise from change, addition, abstraction, or transposition, [such] figures attract the attention of the auditor and do not suffer him to grow languid, as he is roused from time to time by some striking expression (*Institutes Book IX, 2:41-45*).

Beyond this analysis (which shows that the apostrophe was a rhetorical trope at risk of overuse) there are abundant examples in every genre of Greco-Roman literature. Livy, for example, narrating what purports to be a balanced historical account, frequently appeals directly to his reader when he offers his own evaluation of events.[65] In *Ab Urbe Condita IX* he begins with his typical hetero-diegetic third person narrative stance but then turns aside regularly from the primary discourse to address the audience directly. This is illustrated by the following contrasting stances:

> In the following year came the Caudine Peace, the notorious sequel of a disaster to the Roman arms. Titus Veturius Calvinus and Spurius Postumius were consuls. The Samnites had that year for their general Gaius Pontius (*Book IX, 1.1*).

> Why do you not compare the fortunes of one man with another, of one commander with another? How many Roman generals could I name who have never been unfortunate in a single battle! You may run through page after page of the lists of magistrates, both consuls and Dictators, and not find one with whose valour and fortunes the Roman people have ever for a single day had cause to be dissatisfied (*Book IX 18.12-13*).

Horace's satires also demonstrate frequent audience-focused apostrophes; for example whilst criticising 'the greedy' in *Sermones* 1.1.69-70, the narrator ends his diatribe suddenly, and turning to the audience says, "What are you laughing at? Change the name and this story is about you."[66]

[65] H.V. Canter suggests that "such use of the apostrophe is more usual in poetry." H.V. Canter, 'Rhetorical Elements in Livy's Direct Speeches: Part II' *The American Journal of Philology* 39, no. 1 (1918), pp. 44-64 (p. 49).

[66] Similarly pointed apostrophes are also found in Seneca's tragedies. Cf. Christopher Star, *Action and Self-control: Apostrophe in Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius* (University of Chicago PhD diss., 2003). Also Gordon Williams, 'Poet and Audience in Senecan Tragedy: Phaedra 358- 430', in *Author and Audience in Latin Literature*, ed. by Tony Woodman and Jonathan Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 138-149, and Heather A. Woods, *Hunting literary legacies: captatio in Roman satire* (University of Minnesota PhD diss., 2012).

As would be expected, given the pedigree of poetry as spoken performance, the most frequent examples of apostrophe are found in the works of the poets. This is because the received texts of classical and epic poems are, at least in part, records of performance rather than hermetically sealed texts.[67] In book 16 of the *Iliad*, Homer employs the apostrophe with particular frequency, repeatedly addressing Patroclus (who was Achilles' closest and most tragic friend) emphatically and with significant emotion. As his demise draws nearer, the narrative voice turns to him with increasing frequency, as though caught up in the emotion of the inevitability of Patroclus' fate.

> [Euphorbus] it was that first hurled his spear at thee, knight Patroclus, yet subdued thee not (*Book XVI, 812*).

Ovid is equally willing to appeal to agents beyond the scope of his story. He often calls upon the gods (in *Metamorphoses* 1.1 for example, "Gods, breathe inspiration upon what I have begun… and bring along my continuous poem from the very beginning of the universe to my own time"), but only engages his audience directly with an apostrophe once, whilst praising the qualities of Arachne.[68] Arguing against the rights of the pantheon to receive worship, Ovid praises Arachne's skill and artistry in contrast to Minerva's dependency on her divinity. He appeals to the reader's judgement in the second-person singular (through the imperfect subjunctive of *sciō*, 'to discern'), writing:

> Whether at first she was winding the rough yarn into a new ball, or working the stuff with her fingers, teasing out the clouds of wool, repeatedly, drawing them into long equal threads, twirling the slender spindle with practised

[67] In the sung poems of the classical traditions, the story and its telling in performance overlap significantly. Interestingly, in the Odyssey, the apostrophe to a character is only ever spoken towards Eumaeus, who in Book XVII, never speaks directly without first being spoken to by the narrator: "Then, Eumaeus, the swineherd, you replied…" It is almost as though these apostrophes function as a stage direction to an additional performer.

[68] Cf. Brian Sebastian, *Apostrophe to the gods in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Lucan's Pharsalia, and Statius' Thebaid* (University of Florida PhD diss., 2013).

> thumb, or embroidering with her needle, you could see she was taught by Pallas (*Metamorphoses, Book VI, 22-25*).

Commentary on the classical apostrophe is dominated by the works of Elizabeth Block.[69] She suggests that within this genre the audience are invited to be "primarily a feeling, not judging participant."[70] To this end the apostrophe makes sense as a personal emotive appeal designed to move and solicit pathos, for it implies that characters, audience and narrator all inhabit the same world. Block notes that "at certain points the narrator may intrude in the first person, or address characters and sometimes even the audience in the second person… almost always expressing and demanding a strong response."[71] This conclusion is shared by P.T. Eden, who says, "Apostrophes almost always arise from some intenser feeling in the context," and also by Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophes indicate intense involvement in the situation described."[72]

Whilst the primary effect achieved in classical apostrophes is the obvious emotional engagement generated as a rhetorical effect of the 'direct address' and the 'turning aside', I would suggest that Barbara Johnson's description of apostrophe as a form of ventriloquism is also helpful in analysis of the significant change of narratorial stance. Johnson suggests that in apostrophe "the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee… It manipulates the I/thou structure of direct address in an indirect, fictionalized way… turning silence into mute

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[69] Elizabeth Block, 'The narrator speaks: apostrophe in Homer and Virgil', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 112 (1982), pp. 7-22.
[70] Ibid., p. 9.
[71] Ibid., p. 7. See also Heinrich Lausberg and José Pérez Riesco. *Manual de retórica literaria: fundamentos de una ciencia de la literatura* (Editorial Gredos, 1980), pp. 762-765 and Laurence Perrine, Thomas R. Arp, and Greg Johnson, *Literature: structure, sound, and sense* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), pp. 42-44.
[72] Peter T. Eden, *A commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII,* Vol. 35, (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 2. Also Jonathan D. Culler, 'Apostrophe', *Diacritics* 7, no. 4 (1977), p. 59.

responsiveness."[73]Johnson's point is that the apostrophe implies that an absent or dead character, inanimate being, force, personification or even audience member has the capacity to reply to the address that is made to them. By implication this achieves an ontological illusion which binds that which was previously representational and that which is real into one cohesive reality. Johnson suggests that "the possibility of the latter's reply… makes objects in the universe potentially responsive forces."[74] Without 'placing words in the dummy's mouth', the narrator functions as a ventriloquist, animating characters by implication through opening a direct conversation with them and, paradoxically, through this fiction bringing them into the life of the audience.

The classical apostrophe in most of the examples cited comes across as the genuine outburst of the impassioned story-teller and an expected feature of the rhetorical tradition. In the emotive context of a tragic performance, in the hyperbole of historical narrative or in the exaggeration of apologetic biography, the purpose of the apostrophe was always to stimulate a greater involvement or emotional interaction. Classical employment of the apostrophe was common enough and was employed in a manner consistent with the pantheon of other rhetorical tools so as rarely to generate genuine ontological confusion in the boundaries between the telling and the told. The rhetorical deployment of apostrophe was frequently coupled with other devices such as personification or prosopopoeia and each of these devices was considered by rhetoricians to achieve complementary and similar

[73] Barbara Johnson, 'Apostrophe, animation, and abortion', *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986), pp. 29-47 (p. 45).
[74] Ibid., p. 33. Cf. Colin Davis, 'Can the dead speak to us? De Man, Levinas and Agamben', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 45, no. 1 (2004), pp. 77-89.

effects.[75] However, even in the most straightforward examples of rhetorical or artistic apostrophes a secondary implication may be observed. The change of stance and direction of address contaminates the narrative, stage or representational world and makes a previously impervious ontological boundary permeable. Consequently, characters, objects, divinities and personifications that were explicitly imaginary, entirely remote or previously voiceless are afforded an equivalency of status with the primary characters within the narrative: they operate on the same plane and with the same authority as the orators, demi-gods and heroes.

The apostrophe in its original world may have been employed to solicit pathos, but it also opened an avenue of confusion and contamination in which representation and reality, narration and reception, actors and audience were frequently muddled.

4.2 The Reader in the Novel

Asides to the reader are as common in modern narratives as they were in ancient rhetoric, and consequently there are many very well-known examples in novels from the eighteenth century onwards. The vast majority of these have been described as 'engaging apostrophes,' which, like the classical counterparts solicit empathy and educe earnest engagement with the world of the story's characters. Significantly for the purpose of the novel they also add a degree of realism through the suggestion that the narrated situation is part of a shared universe that includes the world of the reader. A number of obvious examples of this phenomenon in classic texts of the 'western canon' may be cited:

[75] Other devices paired with apostrophe included *ethos* (rhetorical appeal founded upon the speaker's credibility); *pathos* (appeal to the emotions of an audience) and *affectus* (exaggerated appeal to emotions or passions in the human mind). Cf. Culler, 'Apostrophe', p, 62-64.

> Reader, it is impossible we should know what sort of person thou wilt be; for, perhaps, thou may'st be as learned in human nature as Shakespeare himself was.[76]
>
> Reader, I married him. A quiet wedding we had: he and I, the parson and clerk, were alone present.[77]
>
> Your heart would have ached to see the man.[78]
>
> That is a simple scene, reader. But it is almost certain that you, too, have been in love.[79]
>
> With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.[80]

These direct addresses to the reader are the subject of on-going discussion focused predominantly on the capacity of such an appeal to engage the reader. [81] Their significance has been analysed in great depth by critics who have extended the term *narrative apostrophe* to describe any "anomalous communicative circuit at the level of the story and of the reception of the story."[82] One of the most significant analyses of the effects of the short circuits within the 'irresistible invitation of second person

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[76] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones,* 1749. For full discussion of this example cf. Lothar Černý, 'Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's Tom Jones', *Connotations* 2.2 (1992), pp. 137-62.
[77] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 1847.
[78] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton,* 1848.
[79] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 1859.
[80] In these opening sentences, also from *Adam Bede*, which begin with a direct appeal to the reader the text reveals that this particular narrative seeks to solicit pathos through the illusion that the reader's world and the narrative world are absolutely analogous.
[81] "[They] wrote to inspire belief in the situations their novels describe hoping to move actual readers to sympathise… and identify with the "you" in the text." Robyn R. Warhol, 'Toward a theory of the engaging narrator: Earnest interventions in Gaskell, Stowe, and Eliot', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1986), pp. 811-818 (pp. 811- 14). All three of the novelists examined by Warhol make their intentions explicit, both inside and outside their fictional texts. See Gaskell's *Preface to Mary Barton*, p. 37; Stowe's 'Concluding Remarks' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 618-29; and Eliot's *In Which the Story Pauses a Little* p. 150. Both Richard Stang and Thomas Pinney have shown that many mid-nineteenth-century critics and reviewers disapproved of narrative intervention and that novelists of the period would have been aware of the theoretical objections to the convention. See Richard Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p.11, and Thomas Pinney, *The Essays of George Eliot edited by Thomas Pinney* (London: Routledge, 1963), p. 446**.**
[82] Irene Kacandes, *Narrative apostrophe: Case studies in second person fiction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 349.

apostrophe' is that of Irene Kacandes whose study makes three very significant points about the direction, power and emotional force of apostrophes. Firstly she notes that the change of direction intrinsic within the apostrophe "acts as an invitation for the audience to change their stance or perception of what is taking place."[83] Secondly she suggested that the apostrophe reveals an entanglement of animation and power through which the narrator attempts to preserve some authority and claim over the received meaning of the text:

> Those who give the word – God, orator, poet or narrator – wield power by controlling the other, but they also risk losing control by giving life and voice to the other. What they gain by taking that risk is the possibility of provoking response, of succeeding to animate, of rousing to action.[84]

Thirdly, Kacandes suggests that the apostrophe positions the reader as a voyeur and witness of the emotional force created in the intimacy of the relationship between the narrator and the anonymous listener, who is addressed directly by the apostrophe as 'you.' This may make the reader consciously complicit in the reception of the text by obliging the reader to accept a role as surrogate recipient of the narrated message and as steward of the text.

A number of other commentators on the role and significance of the apostrophe also merit attention. Robyn Warhol has suggested apostrophes are one of a number of strategies intended to "evoke recognition and identification in the person who holds the book and reads, even if the 'you' in the text resembles that person only slightly, or not at all."[85] This explicit appeal to the reader, regardless of the relationship between the actual and 'presumed reader', achieves a sense of

[83] Ibid., p. 86. Elizabeth Block has suggested that the "you" encoded in the text seems to suggest a narratee and imply or expect a certain type of reader (*The narrator speaks*, p. 7). Gerald Prince , conversely has said, "If it should occur that the reader bears an astonishing resemblance to the narratee this is an exception and not the rule." Gerald Prince, 'Notes toward a Characterization of Fictional Narratees', *Genre 4* (1971), pp. 100–05 (p. 101).
[84] Kacandes, *Narrative apostrophe*, p. 343
[85] Warhol, *Toward a theory*, p. 86

correspondence between the world of the reader and that presented within the text. This sense of overlap or contiguity is achieved through the "short circuited communication" of the apostrophe where the distance between the voices of the characters in the text and the recipients of the narrative is narrowed. A transcendent worldview is implied, in which the fictional characters of the story and the reader of the story are equally significant stakeholders.

Jonathan Culler has usefully explored the manner in which apostrophes collapse the distance between the world within and the world beyond the narrative. He suggests that the apostrophe "makes its point in troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit of communication itself."[86] This notion underpins Monika Fludernik's focus on the potential within a second person focused apostrophe to alienate the reader from the world of the story.[87] Fludernik's analysis diverges significantly from the observations of Warhol and Kacandes. She suggests that, whilst on one level an apostrophe is a tool of rhetorical engagement, on another level some apostrophes invert the background and the foreground of human 'experientiality', bringing into consciousness the narrator's distance from the reader's own perception of temporality, and thus revealing the emotional power-imbalance between the experience of the narrator and the reader.[88] She calls these destabilising apostrophes 'radical narrative apostrophes.'[89] Her contention is that the

[86] Jonathan D. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 135.
[87] Monika Fludernik, 'Second-person narrative as a test case for narratology: The limits of realism', *Style* 28, no. 3 (1994), pp. 445-479.
[88] Fludernik suggests that experientiality and narrativity are interchangeable terms: experientiality refers to the ways in which narrative taps into a readers' sense of their own familiar experiences and activates "natural" cognitive parameters. Narrativity is the interpretation of embodied cognitive faculties, intentions and action. Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 28.
[89] Fludernik, *Second-person narrative,* p. 470. Cf. Rolf Reitan, 'Theorizing Second-Person Narratives: A Backwater Project?' in *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction*, ed. by Per Krogh Hansen, Stefan Iversen and Henrik Skov Nielsen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), p.148.

apostrophe addressed to the reader reveals that the text is a part of a communication strategy by the narrator that requires complicity from the audience. Counterintuitively, this realisation can divorce the reader from the immediacy of the narrative and precipitate a previously un-demanded self-consciousness that destabilises a reader's sense of her own role in the narrative and her status as recipient.[90]

I would suggest that the diverse effects of narrative apostrophes evidence their inherent capacity to destabilise the distance between the worlds inside and outside the text. By breaking frames between layers or levels of narrative apostrophes move the reader beyond naiveté, showing the reader that they are the subject of rhetorical artistry whilst also precipitate a new subjective involvement in the world of the text. As Kacandes concludes, the apostrophe "elicits the potential involvement of anyone who will consider her/himself addressed by the narrator's "you" and invites slippage in the reader's role."[91]

4.3 Visual Illusion

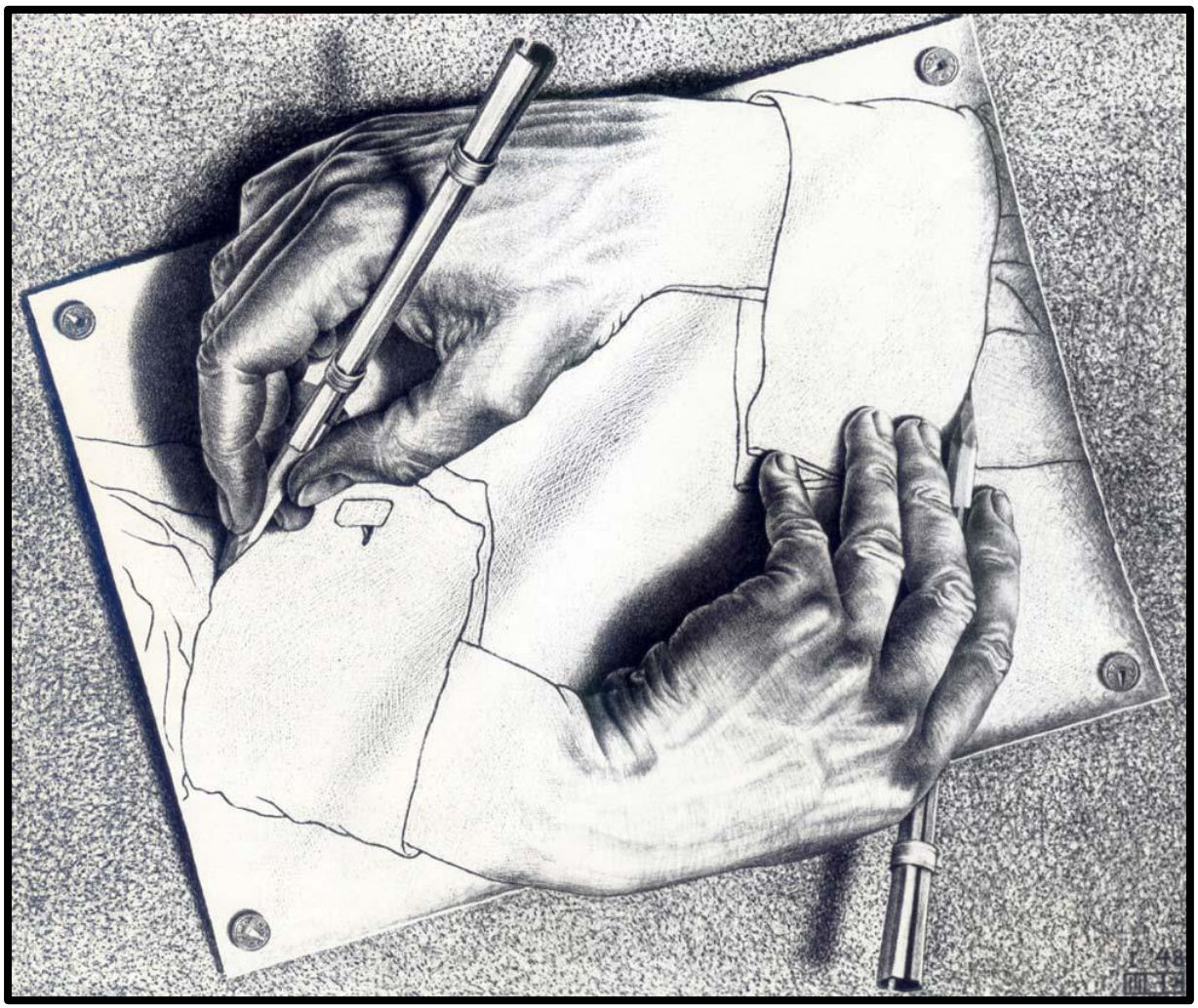
Whilst there are more than enough examples of frame-breaking within literary traditions and texts, a number of works of art from a broad range of traditions and media also usefully illustrate the profound potentiality within any simulacra or simulation for confusion between distinct worlds. A range of art works have been considered in isolation by a number of different scholars and the examples below have all been the subject of some discussion. I have chosen the following pieces that epitomise distinct and diverse metaleptic movements and contend that they evidence

[90] Rolf Reitan, suggests that the appeal to the second person makes overt the reality that narrative is always addressed 'to' and 'for' and highlights the non-correspondence of the audience and the nominal addressee of the apostrophe. Reitan, *Theorizing*, p. 139.
[91] Irene Kacandes, 'Are you in the text?: The "literary performative" in postmodernist fiction', *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1993), pp. 139-153 (p. 140).

precisely the variety of provocation and confusion between the interior, surface and exterior that is also found in movements across the thresholds of representation and reality within texts.[92]

[92] A number of these themes are usefully explored and developed by Jean Baudrillard in his seminal work, *Simulacra and simulation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

Diego Velázquez, *The Maids of Honour*, 1656.



M.C. Escher, *Drawing Hands*, 1948.

Pere Borrell del Caso, *Escaping Criticism*, 1874.

Charles-Amédée-Philippe van Loo, *Camera Obscura*, 1764.

Grant Morrison, *Animal Man #23*, 1990.

Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child Divided*, 1993.

René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1929.

In Diego Velázquez's, *The Maids of Honour* (1656) the artist uses mirrors and screens and an unexpected self-portrait to invert the spectator's gaze. "Instead of depicting the subject gazing at the artist, Velázquez shows the artist viewing the subject."[1] These complexities have made *The Maids of Honour* one of the most frequently analysed compositions in Western art. A number of interpretations seem equally possible although Michel Foucault's suggestion is perhaps the most astute and is therefore widely cited. He contends that the composition of the painting causes oscillation between the interior, the surface and the exterior of the work.

> The spectacle he is observing is thus doubly invisible: first, because it is not represented within the space of the painting, and, second, because it is situated precisely in that blind point, in that essential hiding-place into which our gaze disappears from ourselves at the moment of our actual looking. We could, in effect, guess what it is the painter is looking at if it were possible for us to glance for a moment at the canvas he is working on; but all we can see of that canvas is its texture, the horizontal and vertical bars of the stretcher, and the obliquely rising foot of the easel. Because we can see only that reverse side, we do not know who we are, or what we are doing. Are we the seen or seeing?[2]

Foucault's argument is compelling. Representations involve a degree of creativity, invention and discovery which means that they are not replications of reality but imaginative departures from that which they represent. The relationship between the represented and the representation is characterised by a degree of disruption and a feeling of impermanence. Representation both presupposes the orderliness and coherence of that which it represents and at the same time compromises and

[1] Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A postmodern a/theology* (Chigao: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 123.
[2] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2002), p. 14.

transgresses it, because the representation obscures the subject represented within or implied by it.[3] As Foucault says about *The Maids of Honour*:

> Representation undertakes to represent itself here in all its elements, with its images, the eyes to which it is offered, the faces it makes visible, the gestures that call it into being. But there, in the midst of this dispersion which it is simultaneously grouping to-gether and spreading out before us, indicated compellingly from every side, is an essential void: the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation - of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance. This very subject - which is the same - has been elided. And representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form.[4]

M.C. Escher's Drawing Hands (1948) is one of the most frequently cited artistic examples of metalepsis.[5] His depiction of one hand drawing another is inherently paradoxical, and invites an understanding from the viewer that it depicts an ontologically impossible state of affairs. Like the artist in Velázquez's *The Maids of Honour*, the hands in their strange interaction bring the role of the artist and the viewer into focus, and reveal the paradox of depiction; wherein a hand depicts a hand, depicting a hand *ad infinitum*. Notable comment on this 'strange loop' is made by Douglas Hofstadter who, without using the term metalepsis, suggested in his famous exploration of *Gödel, Escher, Bach* that the paradoxical construct is an illustration of the primacy of self-reference. His contention is that within art, mathematics, and music, recursion and isomorphic loops produce elevated correspondences or "infections" across worlds. Hofstadter suggests that:

> In the end, we are self-perceiving, self-inventing, locked-in mirages that are little miracles of self-reference.[6]

[3] Cf. Stephen David Ross, 'Modernity and the Misrepresentation of Representation', in *Dialectic and narrative*, ed. by Thomas R. Flynn and Dalia Judovitz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 145.
[4] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 16
[5] Cf. Douglas R. Hofstadter, *I am a strange loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).
[6] Ibid., p. 363.

Whilst Velázquez's work prompts confusion in a number of ways, and Escher's drawings represent the paradoxical possibilities of representation, the works of Pere Borrell del Caso offer a much less complicated and more overt frame-breaking technique. In *Escaping Criticism* (1874) and *Two Girls Laughing* (1880) Borrell del Caso offers some of the "best known examples of *trompe-l'œil*" (deceit of the eye).[7] *Trompe-l'œil* itself has been employed in art since Greco-Roman murals depicted doors or windows intended to extend the sense of space found in a room. Famously Baroque interiors frequently employed *quadratura* as a form of *trompe-l'œil* to optically open up flat ceilings with an illusion of a dome or a view of the sky. Such illusions were extended by 18th Century artists such as Charles-Amédée-Philippe van Loo who not only painted false windows in his paintings for the Prussian royal family but also added characters into these fictive windows, offering the appearance of a window and the intrusion of children or visitors where none existed.[8] The effect of *trompe-l'œil* was taken further still by Borrell del Caso and other realists who used the technique to blur the boundary between 'real' and 'fictitious' space and comment, through representation, on the nature of the representation. Borrell del Caso suggests overtly that that which is representational contains the capacity to intrude into the reality of the viewer's world.

> Many normal paintings have much depth perspective but do not appear to be real. Borrell del Caso's skill revolves around teasing the viewer into believing something is that is not (i.e., by manipulating the viewers' cues to depth perception so that their brain momentarily thinks it is viewing a real object). We are tricked into thinking that the boy is actually climbing out of the frame. Only the sense of touch allows the viewer to differentiate between the visual

[7] Cf. Nicholas Wade, *Art and Illusionists* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), p. 535.
[8] Cf. Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful science: Enlightenment entertainment and the eclipse of visual education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), p. 347.

> illusion and reality. The observer is disarmingly thrilled at eventually unmasking the artist's deception.[9]

René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* (1929) is one of a number of surrealist images that demonstrate something of the legacy of *trompe-l'œil* and, in turn, contributed to the popularity of self-referentiality in modern art. Magritte prohibits the viewer from regarding this particular work as anything other than an image, inscribing 'c'est ne pas une pipe' under his painting. Magritte commented,

> The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture 'This is a pipe', I'd have been lying![10]

The overt deconstruction of the image within its own framework confounds the viewer's attempt to contain the image of the pipe as a simplistic representation within her own reality and invites a meta-critical sense of perception and representation. By reminding viewers that they are not seeing a pipe but a representation of a pipe, Magritte continued a theme of substitution and the paradox of representation that was present in many of his works. Describing his inspiration for *Elective Affinities* in his lecture "La ligne de vie" (1932) Magritte suggested that he had woken one morning in a hotel room and had mistakenly seen an egg in a cage, where in fact there was a bird in a cage. This led him to a "sudden realisation of an unexpected affinity" between the cage and the egg.[11] Georges Roque has commented that:

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[9] Farhad B. Naini, 'Pere Borrell del Caso's Escapando de la Crítica (Escaping Criticism): Trompe l'oeil and the Emerging Science of Neuroaesthetics', *Archives of facial plastic surgery* 13, no. 5 (2011), pp. 368-369 (p. 369).

[10] Magritte could have written underneath his picture, "This is a picture of a pipe!" This would have been neither a truism nor a lie, but neither would it have made such an overt distinction between an object and its representation.

[11] Georges Roque, 'Painters and their motifs', in *Thematics: new approaches*, ed. by Claude Bremond, Joshua Landy and Thomas Pavel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 146. Roque quotes an unpublished interview with Magritte from 1936 regarding his 1933 work *Elective affinities* in which Magritte says, "One night in 1936 I wake in a room where they had put a cage with its sleeping occupant. Thanks to a magnificent mistake, I saw the bird gone from the cage and replaced by an egg. In this I had a new and astonishing poetic secret, for the shock I felt was caused by the affinity of the two objects, the cage and the egg, whereas this shock had been

> [This] new 'poetic secret' is of course no secret for us, but a rhetorical procedure known as metalepsis, i.e. the transposition of the antecedent and the subsequent; a procedure of which the Surrealists were fond.[12]

Trompe-l'œil and surrealism are both mentioned fairly often in studies of multi-media metalepses. For example, Karin Kukkonen has produced an insightful study into metaleptic effects in graphic novels and Werner Wolf has passed comment on moments of metalepsis in Donald Duck and both allude to a range of prior inspirations implied in these works.[13] The expert in this field is undoubtedly Jeff Thoss who has published a range of essays considering metalepsis within comics.[14] One of his most detailed essays considers the visual significance of metalepsis in the *Animal Man* series of cartoons by Grant Morrison.[15] In these cartoons he notes a range of occasions when drawings "violate the story world's autonomy."[16] Thoss draws broad conclusions and suggests that in Animal Man, Grant Morrison:

> Subverts the very idea of representation and renders [our capacity] to tell a sign from its referent questionable. Concomitantly, the principle of narration and the intelligibility of any story world are endangered too [because] Grant Morrison's tinkering with space… undermines the crucial notion that the space of a page can represent the space of the story.[17]

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generated by the encounter of disparate objects" See also Marcel Paquet, *René Magritte (1898-1967): Thought Rendered Visible* (New York: Midpoint Press, 2001), p. 26.

[12] Roque proceeds to suggest that much of Magritte's art depends upon metalepsis as it allows "the transposition of the antecedent and the subsequent [and] inverts a motif or order of events." Roque, *Painters*, p. 146.

[13] Karin Kukkonen, 'Metalepsis in Comics and Graphic Novels' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. by Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 213–31. Werner Wolf, 'Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial Phenomenon', in *Narratology beyond literary criticism: mediality, disciplinarity* ed. by Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt and Wilhelm Schernus (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 83-107.

[14] Key articles include: Jeff Thoss, 'There's No Place Like Fiction' in *Placing America: American Culture and its Spaces* 3, ed. by Michael Fuchs, and Maria-Theresia Holub (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 91-103; Jeff Thoss, '"This Strip Doesn't Have a Fourth Wall" Webcomics and the Metareferential Turn', *Studies in Intermediality* 5 (2011), pp. 238-240; Jeff Thoss, '"Some weird kind of video feedback time warp zapping thing": Television, Remote Controls, and Metalepsis' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. by Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 158-170.

[15] Jeff Thoss, 'Unnatural narrative and metalepsis: Grant Morrison's Animal Man', in *Unnatural narratives, unnatural narratology*, ed. by Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 189–209.

[16] Ibid, p. 190.

[17] Ibid, p. 206.

Modern realist sculptures include a further range of compositions that generate spatial transgression between a representation and the surrounding reality of the viewer. *Security Guard* (1990) by Duane Hanson, for example was an installation so realistic that many viewers didn't realise the sculpture was 'the art.' "Take lunch, you want to say with a clap on his shoulder, Go out and get some air. But he won't move."[18] Damien Hirst's floor based installations go even further in disturbing the boundary between representation and reality. *Mother and Child (Divided)* is one of Hirst's most famous glass-walled, fromaldehyde filled tank sculptures. Hirst encloses the tank in a strong white frame but invites the viewer to walk between the halves of the two animals.[19] This composition has become archetypal of *transgressive art.*[20] He suggests that cutting up the animals and exposing them in this way is like creating emotions scientifically.

> What do you do if an animal is symmetrical? You cut it in half, and you can see what's on the inside and outside simultaneously.[21]

This process somehow conflates the interior of the cow's life and world with the exterior of the viewer's, commingling distinct worlds and transgressing the normal delineation of boundaries. Giovanni Aloi has suggested that this level of proximity provokes an uncomfortable closeness that alludes performatively to the vulnerability of the viewer even more than it does to the abstract beauty of the internal organs.

> It is the friction between the attraction and revulsion that makes the work worthy of attention, Here the temptation to walk between the two halves is quite undeniable, so much so that gallery visitors often spontaneously form an orderly queue at one end of the piece in order to experience the spectacle of

[18] See also Security Guard (1990) by Duane Hanson. Hanson comments, *"*I want to achieve a certain tough realism which speaks of the fascinating idiosyncrasies of our times." *Gagosian Gallery Press Release* (October 21 2014), http://www.gagosian.com/exhibitions/duane-hanson--october-30-2014.
[19] Cf. Genesis 15:9-17.
[20] Kieran Cashell, *Aftershock: The ethics of contemporary transgressive art* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 128.
[21] Stuart Morgan, 'An Interview with Damien Hirst' in *Damien Hirst: No Sense of Absolute Corruption* (London: Gagosian Gallery, 1995), pp. 9-28 (p.17).

> the open animal carcass. From that perspective, from the inside… the animal becomes a kind of diorama, displaying an unfamiliar and hidden world.[22]

The visual confusion and the contamination between worlds identified in all of these works demonstrate cogently the effect of paradox and confusion within representation. In each case the artist has used visual forms to destabilise the boundaries between representation and reality. I suggest that the challenges to conventional boundaries and frames found in these artistic depictions elicit similarly confounding, collapsing, distanciating, destabilising and immersing movements that are found in the transgressions between one narrative situation and another, and therefore it should be expected that moments of instability in the narrative surfaces of the biblical text might produce a similar sense of intrusion, proximity and confusion which challenge a reader's sense of the relationship between the narrative world and her own.

4.4 Breaking the Fourth Wall

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was a philosopher who wrote a number of sentimental plays (with accompanying essays) intended to introduce a degree of naturalism in theatre that contrasted with the formulaic conventions of classical tragedy and comedy. His 'serious genre' spurned the caricatures of lofty characters found in tragedy and the mockery of common people found in traditional comedy. Diderot instead proposed more realistic characterisation and stage direction and sought to present the action of the play as real events so that the audience might feel that they were observing through a transparent fourth wall at the front of a proscenium stage.[23] Since Diderot's day, lines and directions that allow the narrative on stage to

[22] Giovanni Aloi, *Art and animals* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p. 53.
[23] John Stevenson, *The fourth wall and the third space* (Centre for Playback Theatre, 1995), *http://www. playbackschool. org/articles/Stevenson.*

transgress this invisible boundary and to challenge the illusion of realism, have therefore been described as *breaking the fourth wall*.[24]

There are a wide range of techniques that transcend this invisible wall, and they are found in a very broad range of theatre. A century before Diderot, Shakespeare for example, was consistently scripting interactions with the audience that muddled the boundary between the representational and the actual. Through comic asides to the audience he frequently included acknowledgement of their own fictionality in the words of his characters (either tacitly or overtly). Examples include Edmund in *King Lear*, who, when alone on stage, explains to the audience what he is soon to do:

> Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land. Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund as to th' legitimate. (Fine word, "legitimate.") Edmund the base shall top th' legitimate. I grow, I prosper. Now gods, stand up for bastards. (Act I scene ii:16)

This soliloquy muddles Edmund's interior monologue with address to the audience and appeal to the gods. It is followed in the same scene by a moment that reminds the audience more overtly that they are witnessing the unfolding of a drama. Edmund sees his brother enter and says:

> And pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy. (Act I scene ii:145)

In similar fashion in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes makes a joke of his own role as a character within a 'play.' Making a pun on his instruction to Mamillius, he exclaims,

> Go play, boy play, thy mother plays (and I play too – but so disgraced a part, whose issue will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour will be my knell). Go play boy play. (Act I Scene ii:186)

[24] "As though the stage did not have three, but four walls." Cf. Warren R. Mauer, *Understanding Gerhart Hauptmann* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), p. 25.

Whilst most of Shakespeare's sardonic depiction of narrative thresholds are firmly focused on amusing the audience the opposite intent is evident in the fourth wall breaks found in *Bertolt Brecht's* plays, where breaking the fourth wall is used to deliberately 'alienate' the audience and deprive them of any illusion of realism. Brecht took breaking the fourth wall to a new level of significance in his application of the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation or distancing effect) wherein he sought to remind audiences of the superficiality and artifice of theatre, and invite them to view their own interaction in the drama more critically. Rather than adding amusement to a drama, as Shakespearean frame-breaking did, Brecht solicits an introspective awareness amongst the audience that they are engaged in an artistic representation of existence which demands response rather than enjoyment.[25] The *Verfremdung* technique was inspired by a visit to Moscow in 1935 where Brecht saw the work of Mei Lan-fang's Chinese theatre and realised that this stylised and symbolic art form "never pretended there was no audience."[26] From 1935 onwards Brecht sought to confound the audience's comfortable association with characters in his drama and induce a critical understanding of the distance between audience and characters. He described this process as follows:

> A child whose mother remarries, seeing her as wife not just mother, or whose teacher is prosecuted, seeing him in relation to criminal law, experiences a V-effekt.[27]

[25] Theatre represents a permanent tension between a 'neuro-aesthetic' experience (the pleasure of watching) and 'engagement' (cognitive participation in the tension of the drama). Cf. Philip J. Auter, and Donald M. Davis, 'When characters speak directly to viewers: Breaking the fourth wall in television', *Journalism Quarterly* 68, no. 1-2 (1991), pp. 165-171.

[26] J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 142. Styan comments: "Brecht conceived the alienation effect not only as a specific aesthetic program but also as a political mission of the theatre." Styan notes that Brecht was inspired by the philosophies of Hegel and Karl Marx and that he borrowed significantly from Russian formalist critic Victor Shklovsky's concept of 'Ostranenie'. Ibid., p. 144.

[27] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. by Marx Silberman, Steve Giles and Tom Kuhn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), p. 188.

To achieve this effect Brecht's characters frequently address the audience in theatrical asides designed to estrange them from the narrative unfolding on the stage. For example in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, Brecht's narrator addresses the audience directly saying:

> Pipe down you boys in the back row! And, lady your hat is in the way![28]

Similarly in *The Good Person of Szechwan* the very last line of the play functions as a final aside to the audience, with the Gods saying:

> Now let us go: the search at last is o'er, We have to hurry on! Then give three cheers, and one cheer more for the good person of Szechwan![29]

Even more significantly, in the stage directions for *The Drums in the Night*, first performed in 1922, Brecht had the auditorium hung with placards on which were painted lines from the play, including the recommendation "Don't gawp so romantically!" (*Glotzt nicht so romantisch!*) This line was a quote taken from a tirade in the final scene by the soldier, Kragler (1:176). However, Brecht repositions the line to address the audience, suggesting a barbed criticism of the audience's voyeuristic, passive spectatorship and offering them advice regarding how they should perceive the unfolding drama. "Glotzt nicht so romantisch" consequently became a Brechtian maxim for theater audiences.

In a range of different ways Brecht sought to constantly remind the audience that they were watching a play and refused them the option of accepting the world of the characters at face value. The interruptions of Brecht's characters and the hung placards in the auditorium were his way of making the audience aware that they

[28] Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. by George Tabari (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1981) and Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht Collected Plays: 6: Good Person of Szechwan; The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui; Mr Puntila and his Man Matti*, trans. by John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen Drama, 2015), p.117.
[29] Brecht, *Brecht Collected Plays: 6,* p.110.

were sitting in a theatre watching a drama about which they were required to think, rather than be transported on an emotional wave of sympathy or concern for a particular character. L.M. Bogad has summarised the *Verfremdung* effect as follows:

> By showing the instruments of theater and how they can be manipulative — for example, the actor calling out "Cue the angry red spotlight!" before he shrieks with rage, or "Time for the gleeful violin" before dancing happily as the violinist joins him on stage, or visibly dabbing water on his eyes when he is supposed to cry… the audience can be entertained without being manipulated.[30]

Brecht was convinced that the notion of the fourth wall was significant, not just in regard to the audience's experience of the drama on stage, but also to the more fundamental struggle between representation and reality. He considered that realism, and the notion of the front of the stage as an invisible fourth wall, necessarily diminished critical engagement amongst the audience, which in turn must obstruct the capacity of representational art to challenge and speak about reality. His intention was to speak critically about reality through the socio-political commonalities between the unfolding drama on the stage and in the real world. These intentions are most evident in his 1940 *Messingkauf Dialogues*, which script "a discussion of the metaleptic implications of the fourth wall" between a dramatist, an actor, a philosopher and a worker.[31]

> *DRAMATIST:* How is it with the fourth wall?
> *PHILOSOPHER:* What's that?
> *DRAMATIST:* Normally, one acts as if the stage doesn't have three, but rather four walls; the fourth there, where the audience is sitting. This establishes and perpetuates the appearance that what is happening on stage is a real event of life, and that there is no audience there. To act with the fourth wall means to act as though there were no audience present.
> *ACTOR:* You understand, the audience sees very intimate things, without being seen themselves. It's exactly as if one looks through a keyhole to

[30] L.M. Bogad, 'Alienation effect' in *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox For Revolution (Pocket Edition),* ed. by Andrew Boyd and David Oswald Mitchell (New York: Or Books, 2013), p. 211.
[31] Cf. Davis, "Not a Soul", p. 88.

observe people who have no idea they're not alone. In reality, we arrange everything so that it can be easily seen. This arrangement is simply hidden.
PHILOSOPHER: Ah, I see, so the audience quietly assumes that they are not sitting in the theater, since they are not noticed. They have the illusion that they are sitting before a keyhole. If this is so, however, they should wait until they are in the cloakroom before they applaud.
ACTOR: But their applause confirms that the actors have succeeded in acting as if no one was there!
PHILOSOPHER: Do we really need this intricately secretive arrangement between the actors and you?
WORKER: I don't need it. But maybe the artists need it?
ACTOR: It is seen as necessary for realistic acting.
WORKER: I'm for realistic acting.
PHILOSOPHER: But the fact that one is sitting in a theater, and not before a keyhole, is also a reality! How can it be realistic to cover that up? No, we want to take down the fourth wall. The agreement is hereby announced. In the future, show unashamedly that you have arranged everything so that we can see everything best.
ACTOR: So that means that from now on we'll officially notice you. We can look down at you and even speak with you.
PHILOSOPHER: Naturally. Whenever it is useful to the demonstration.
(*Werke* 22 802–3)[32]

In works of theatre the physical transgression of the boundary between the narrative and the audience can achieve ironic awareness amongst the audience, obliging them to judge the events they observe, muddling the distinction between reality and dramatic representation, deautomatizing perception and provoking consideration of their own role in the transmission and reception of the dramatised narrative.[33] Elements of this range of provocations are evident in part in Shakespeare's humour; in significant measure in Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* and even more overtly in the nuanced and confusing model of the fourth wall found in Samuel Beckett's "failed realism."[34] In *Waiting for Godot* and *Eleutheria* Beckett presents the stage as a space of "complete ontological indeterminacy, reflecting the unstable metaphysics of

[32] Ibid., p. 89.
[33] Cf. Emily Ronald, 'Breaking the Wall', Nomos Journal (May 2015), http://nomosjournal.org/columns/reading-into-religion/breaking-the-wall/. Ronald makes the interesting suggestion that Matthew 13:13 ("The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.") represents fourth wall pressure.
[34] Alexandra Smith, *Writing Against the Image: Teju Cole, Ben Lerner, and Aesthetics of Failure* (The University of Sydney PhD diss., 2015), p. 118.

lived experience."[35] *Eleutheria*, for example, includes dialogue between Victor, a Glazier and scripted roles for a Spectator (who, until the final act is a member of the audience), a Prompter and a Voice from a Box (who remains in the audience). These characters (particularly the spectator), refuse to accept the play's entreaties to the audience and limit the on-stage characters' capacity to break the fourth wall. Nathaniel Davies summarises this incident as follows:

> Had the spectator accepted the validity of Victor's argument, the breaking of the fourth wall would have been a success—at least from a Brechtian perspective—with the audience coming to an ethical realization by drawing connections between real life and stage fantasy. As it plays out, Victor is rebuffed by an uncomprehending audience, incapable of self-reflection. The only conclusion consists in Victor being prodded into telling a "boring" and "stupid," but altogether "not bad" story that finally satisfies the spectator, who then leaves the stage (150). The breaking of the fourth wall fails due to the spectator's non-comprehension and unwillingness to give up his demand for a "story," no matter how trivial this story may be.[36]

Significantly then, the drama on stage has developed into a commentary on the role and the capacity of the audience to respond to the drama on stage. The fourth wall is broken to demonstrate the significance of the fourth wall. The Spectator character is given the role of vocalising the audience's dissatisfaction with the newly destabilised boundaries of the stage, whilst destabilising these boundaries. This scene is the dramatic equivalent of Escher's drawing hands or Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem.

In *Waiting for Godot* (Act 2) a very different but equally unsettled metaleptic transgression of the fourth wall reveals once more Beckett's complicated sense of relationship between the audience and drama. In this scene Vladimir and Estragon are alone on stage waiting. Estragon exits the stage left and right, panicking Vladimir on each occasion, refusing to explain his destination. Both characters confirm the

[35] Davies, "Not a Soul", p. 88.
[36] Ibid., p. 96.

rear of the stage to be a solid surface, and contemplate the possibility of escape through the fourth wall:

> *VLADIMIR*: We're surrounded! (*Estragon makes a rush towards back.*) Imbecile! There's no way out there. (*He takes Estragon by the arm and drags him towards front. Gesture towards front.*) There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go! Quick! (*He pushes Estragon towards auditorium. Estragon recoils in horror.*) You won't? (*He contemplates auditorium.*) Well I can understand that. Wait till I see. (*He reflects.*) Your only hope left is to disappear.
> (Act 2, 61-74)

Beckett suggests that the stage is an inescapable space. Even the subtly acknowledged presence of the audience as witnesses provides no consolation to the claustrophobia and condemnation that the characters experience through the logic of their spatial confinement. The self-referentiality of the drama achieves no transcendence: the audience are themselves presented as a soulless void, rather than as the arbiters of and actors within reality, as is implied in Brechtian alienation. As Nathaniel David concludes:

> Instead of breaking down the illusionary ontological barrier between the stage and the audience, Beckett arrives at a new function of the fourth wall. He subverts the form of this illusion in order to create a night-marish vision of lived experience onstage. The reality of the stage comes to reflect the reality of lived experience, and the intrusion of the objective reality of the audience onto that of the stage comes to resemble the intrusion of a disturbing alternate reality—whether that of divine presence or existential void—into one's normal, day-to-day reality. In short, Beckett makes the unstable metaphysical space of the stage reflect the unstable metaphysical nature of lived experience. He accomplishes this by sabotaging the normal functioning of the traditional fourth-wall break, which would otherwise assert the objective, material reality of the auditorium as final and unquestionable.[37]

If Shakespeare's transgressions across the threshold of the fourth wall serve a primarily comic purpose, and Brecht's seek to assert the primacy and importance of the audience's objective reality, Beckett's present an indeterminacy, a multi-directional permeability and an ontological confusion. Beckett uses metaleptic

[37] *Loc. cit.*

movement between the auditorium and the stage to connect the two spaces, to raise questions, to challenge the separation between reality and representation and to fuse into one universe the experiences of human existence owned by the audience and characters on stage.

5. Metaleptic types

Having explored a range of examples and illustrations of transgressions across the thresholds between representation and reality, consideration of the specifics of Genette's model of metalepsis also merits attention. Since Genette's work in 1972 a plethora of developments and adjustments have been proposed. Some of these responses clarify, rather than modify, seeking to expand Genette's model or develop a sense of breadth and range of metalepses. Werner Wolf's explorations of transmedial metalepsis has demonstrated the value of metalepsis as a tool for explaining precisely the sorts of non-literary frame-breaking considered above. His definition, often cited by others, builds upon Genette's and suggests that metalepsis is ultimately a "paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between (onto)logically distinct (sub)worlds and/or levels."[38] Beyond such clarifications the most stimulating responses for my study are those which seek to dissect the mechanics of metalepsis. To this end I suggest that Marie-Laure Ryan, Monica Fludernik, Jean Bessière, William Nelles, Brian McHale, Jean-Marie Schaeffer and John Pier offer

[38] Wolf, *Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial phenomenon*, p. 91. Wolf's longer reformulation of this definition is follows: "Metalepsis can be defined as a salient phenomenon occurring exclusively in representations, namely as a usually non-accidental and paradoxical transgression of the border between levels or (sub)worlds that are ontologically (in particular concerning the opposition reality vs. fiction) or logically differentiated (logically in a wide, not formal sense, including e.g. temporal or spatial differences)." Ibid., p. 50.

the most significant additional contributions, arranged below according to the manner in which they taxonomise types of metalepsis.

5.1 Ontological and Rhetorical Metalepsis

Amongst the attempts to develop Genette's model a number of adjustments to the structure he posited stand out. William Nelles, for example divides metalepsis into three distinct movements. He posits, firstly, that "unmarked" movements within a discourse level are a relatively frequent trope akin to metonymy and are an anticipated part of the rhetorical process of story-telling. He then divides "distinctly marked" movements across unexpected narrative boundaries within a story according to their direction: he defines a movement from the surrounding to the embedded narrative as *intra-metalepsis*, and the movement from the embedded narrative out into the embedding discourse as *extra-metalepsis*.[39] (An example of *intra-metalepsis* would be noted if Jesus interacted directly with a parabolic character and an *extra-metalepsis* if a parabolic character conversed with a disciple.) Gerald Prince has offered a different taxonomy. He suggests that metalepses are noticed most when they are "vertical" (i.e. change levels) or "horizontal" (when they demonstrate transgressions within one diegetic plane – for example between supposedly separate fictional worlds). The latter he defines as *perilepsis*.[40] An example of *perilepsis* would be evident if the 'Good Samaritan' crossed embedding thresholds to interact with the 'Good Shepherd'.[41]

These diverse adjustments, and those which classify by ascent and descent or by inward and outward direction have led in their fullness to the perception that

[39] William Nelles, *Frameworks: Narrative levels and embedded narrative* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 1997).
[40] Gerald Prince, 'Disturbing frames', *Poetics Today* 27, no. 3 (2006), pp. 625-30 (p. 628).
[41] A famous example of this form is found in Woody Allen's "The Kugelmass Episode" in which Allen narrates a Professor hiring a magician so that he can be projected into the fictitious world of Gustave Flaubert's 1856 debut novel, Madame Bovary, and have an affair. Woody Allen, 'The Kugelmass Episode' in *The New Yorker* (May 2, 1977).

there is a fundamental difference between moments of metalepsis in which characters at one narrative level communicate about characters who inhabit another and moments of metalepsis when members of similarly distinct narrative levels communicate with each other, or share the same world.[42] This distinction suggests a fundamental separation between metalepses which involve only paradoxical communication, and those which involve paradoxical presence within a narrative level. Marie-Laure Ryan has championed this approach and has explained metalepsis through the terminology of 'stacks' in which illocutionary or ontological boundaries separate narratives which are generated at different levels within narrative worlds.[43] She suggested that these stacked fictional worlds divide the cognitive activity of the reader and that "metalepsis is the operation by which narrative challenges the structure [and rigid boundaries] of the stack."[44] The significance of this model (which has some traction) is that it differentiates strongly between ontological metalepses (that suggest interactions between members of logically distinct worlds) and rhetorical ones (that precipitate a convergence in communication situated in rationally distinct worlds).[45] Ryan suggests that the former create mutual contamination between two radically distinct worlds such as "real versus imaginary" or "normal versus dream." Rhetorical metalepses however, are a 'temporary breach of illusion' that do not threaten the inherent logic of the narrative universe, rather they "open a small window that allows a quick glance across levels,

[42] Cf. Prince, 'Disturbing frames', p. 627. A full systematization of narrative metalepsis has been produced by Klaus Meyer-Minnemann. He distinguishes between metaleptic movements within the discourse and within the story itself. The former involve different communicative situations and the later different spatiotemporal worlds. He also distinguishes between vertical and horizontal metalepses and offers a consideration regarding the different feelings of strangeness that they achieve. Klaus Meyer-Minnemann, 'Un procédé narrative qui «produit un effet de bizarrerie»: la métalepse narrative' in *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation*, op. cit., pp. 133–150 (p. 146).
[43] Ryan, *Avatars of story*, p. 204
[44] Ibid., p. 206.
[45] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Logique culturelle de la métalepse, ou la métalepse dans tous ses états' in *Métalepses. Entorses au pacte de la representation,* op. cit., pp. 201–23.

but the window closes after a few sentences, and the operation ends up reasserting the existence of boundaries."[46]

Ryan's developments are useful, especially her recognition that metalepsis represents an "attempt to expand the empire of fiction toward the most remote worlds within the universe of the imaginatively possible."[47] She notes that when metalepsis occurs in disciplines of logic, mathematics, language and science it is more subversive, because it renders a concrete universe with stable properties entirely impossible.[48] She cites the paradox of Epimenides (all Cretans are liars), Gödel's incompleteness theorem and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle as examples of strange loops which, when found in rational representations and truth systems, are like a "cancer that destroys from within the ambitions of totalitarian mathematical systems."[49]

A great deal of Ryan's analysis is invaluable. Where I diverge from her position, however, is on the distinction between a 'genuine' (ontological) metalepsis and a 'pseudo-metalepsis' (rhetorical).[50] This notion is useful when talking of computer programming, as Ryan does: in this context, a rhetorical metalepsis is simply a circular reference within a script, whereas an ontological metalepsis causes the memory segment where the paradox is scripted to overwrite itself.[51] However, there is a fundamental difference between the internal structures of logic languages and the narrative processes that depend upon the observer, spectator, audience or readers. In the latter media metalepsis is created through illogical movements of an

[46] Ryan, *Avatars of story,* p. 207.
[47] Ibid*.,* p. 209.
[48] Ibid*.,* p. 210.
[49] Ibid*.,* p. 212.
[50] Ibid*.,* p. 218.
[51] Cf. David Herman, 'Genette meets Vygotsky: narrative embedding and distributed intelligence', *Language and Literature 15*, no. 4 (2006), pp. 357-380.

annunciation, symbol or character across a story-telling threshold, yet it is inadequate to describe these as merely 'rhetorical.' Such moments are rhetorical in as far as they are spoken and written, but they are also necessarily ontological or 'genuine' because they undermine the distinction between representation and reality.[52] This sentiment is expressed by Alice Bell and Jan Alber:

> All instances of metalepsis are physically impossible because in the actual world, entities from two different ontological domains cannot interact. For instance, a fictional character cannot literally communicate with his or her author, and an author cannot step into the fictional world that s/he has created… two contradictory states of affairs cannot be true at the same time, which means, for example, that the same character cannot exist in two ontologically distinct domains simultaneously.[53]

Bell and Alber's position is persuasive for it builds upon Genette's suggestion that diegetic layers are themselves necessarily at the same time rhetorical and ontological. Genette implies that narrative is itself an essentially paradoxical process, which allows distinct worlds to be integrated through the act of narrative. This sentiment is explored meaningfully by Monika Fludernik who re-defined metalepsis as a "blending" of distinct worlds. Indeed, Fludernik suggests that "Genette's narrative metalepsis is in effect an umbrella term containing an implicit typology that integrates Ryan's distinction."[54] Fludernik's view, which I share, is that the spectrum of metaleptic effects are all 'genuine', but make strange loops for different reasons. She suggests that whether authorial, ontological or rhetorical each produces a fundamental collision between levels of representation and reality. Fludernik nevertheless categorises the primary threshold transgression as follows:

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[52] An idea iterated by Rimmon-Kennan who suggests that metalepsis "undermines the separation between narration and story." Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, p. 93.
[53] Alice Bell and Jan Alber, 'Ontological metalepsis and unnatural narratology', *Journal of Narrative Theory* 42, no. 2 (2012), pp. 166-192 (p. 167).
[54] Monika Fludernik, *The fictions of language and the languages of fiction* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 387.

1. Authorial metalepsis which foreground the 'inventedness' of the narrative;
2. Ontological metalepsis in which a narrator or character descends a diegetic level;
3. Ontological metalepsis in which a character ascends to a higher narrative level;
4. Rhetorical metalepsis in which words at one diegetic level have operative effect at another.[55]

It is undoubtedly the case that some moments of metalepsis produce no obvious ontological crisis, for example it is not necessarily illogical for a narrator, as part of her artistry to speak directly to a reader or audience member as though their worlds were synonymous. However, even these benign movements reveal the art of story-telling to be an illogical fusion of temporalities. Metalepsis lays bare the boundaries that narrative deigns to cross and reveals reading to be a wonderful absurdity that allows horizons to be fused, selves to be metamorphisised and figures, themes and meanings to come to life.

It is valid to note some metalepses create logic loops only between 'internal' narrative worlds, whilst others create more overt 'external' loops of logic between the reality within a representation and that beyond it. Nevertheless, any inconsistency across a locutionary threshold carries the capacity to unmask the essential paradox of narration and readership whereby representations become alive within realities.

5.2 Past and Present

Jean Bessière has developed the contention that moments of metalepsis are a revelation of the inherently irrational quality of narrative, focusing on the manner in

[55] *Loc cit.* See also John Pier who summarises Fludernik's model in a similar fashion and adds: "It can be seen that rhetorical metalepsis covers all four… Rather than two distinct types of metalepsis – one rhetorical, the other ontological – what is at stake are the forms and degrees of violation between the telling and the told, two aspects of the effects of narrative discourse." Pier, 'Metalepsis', p. 192.

which narrative functions as a representative display of the past in the present.[56] In his model, metalepsis is paradoxical because fictional narrative is itself, by definition a paradoxical "current presentation of the past."[57] When anything disrupts a reader's immersion in the represented past found in a narrative, it is inevitable that attention is drawn to the narrative process as a feature of the reception of representation. In his discussion Bessière refocuses discussion on Genette's original claim that metalepsis is about the transgression between "the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells."[58] Bessière describes the act of presenting the past as actual as a "paradoxical decontextualisation."[59]

> By virtue of the duality of the decontextualization of the presentation and the exteriority of the reader to the literary work… the figuration becomes a constitutive paradox.[60]

Bessière's approach to metalepsis suggests therefore that far from being anachronistic, metalepsis reveals the absurdity inherent with narrative, an idea reiterated in a number of studies.[61] Monika Fleischman, for example, has considered the relationship between narrative and experientiality. She comments that narratives "are intrinsically structured with two time frames: the time of the telling of the story and the time during which the events of the story are assumed to have taken place."[62] Fleischman and Bessière's models of metalepsis suggest that at any level metalepsis is a demonstration of the irrational reconciliation of these time frames.

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[56] Jean Bessière, 'Récit de fiction, transition discursive, présentation actuelle du récit, ou que le récit de fiction est toujours métaleptique' in *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation,* op. cit., pp. 279–94 (p. 280).
[57] *Loc. cit.*
[58] Gérard Genette, *Narrative discourse: An essay in method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 236.
[59] Bessière, 'Récit de fiction', p. 285.
[60] *Loc. cit.* Cf. Jean Bessière and Yves Gilonne, 'The Facticity of the Literary Work', *Paragraph, The Idea of the Literary* 28, No. 2 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 41-56.
[61] Cf. Elinor Ochs Keenan, 'Making It Last: Repetition in Children's Discourse' in *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1975), pp. 279-294.
[62] Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and narrativity: From medieval performance to modern fiction* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), p. 125.

This notion implies that metalepsis is an inevitable feature of narrative, given that the act of narration is a collision between logically incompatible temporalities. Douglas Estes' work on the temporal mechanics found within the Fourth Gospel develops this notion. He suggests that narratives can only overcome their own temporal limitations and restrictions through paradoxical referentiality in which they invite a sense of trans-world significance:

> One of the most critical restrictions on narrative is its temporality; narratives cannot overcome their innate temporal limitations and instead must discover and implement a variety of temporal mechanics that allow for the fullness of truth in time.[63]

This idea is also found in the work of David Herman who examined the rhetorical function of metalepsis and suggested persuasively that the distinct worlds within diegetic layers often need to reference each other to make sense to the reader, but these conflations actually destroy the temporal rigidity of the narrative "now".[64] Herman goes on to explain that metalepsis "plays with the narrative levels in order to question the borderline between reality and fiction, compelling us to question the real and the now."[65]

There is value in understanding metalepsis as a primarily temporal phenomenon. The thresholds between extra, primary and hypo-diegetic levels exist because stories are told in the present and therefore when the tense or spatiotemporal dimensions and characteristics of one mimetic representation of reality intersects or abuts another, the irrationality of remembering or representing the prior in the present becomes apparent. Narrative is always only one honest

[63] Douglas Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 248. Similar ideas are expressed by Ryan, *Avatars*, p. 207.
[64] David Herman, 'Toward a formal description of narrative metalepsis', *Journal of Literary Semantics 26* (1997), pp. 132-152.
[65] *Loc.cit.*

narratorial disclosure away from a collision of realities in a moment when the time of the telling and the time of the told irrationally occupy an overtly conterminal narrative location. The strangeness of metalepsis is thus, at least in part, an overt demonstration of the implicit irrationality of representing one reality within another.

5.3 Cause and Effect

One further approach for consideration is found in studies that classify metalepses according to the narrative consequences of the device, typically noted as 'destabilising', 'disruptive' and 'troubling.' Debra Malina, for example, is not unusual in her analysis of the "mutinous nature [of metalepsis] as a narrative device that disrupts narrative structure."[66] Such insight is further developed in some studies that attend to the cognitive effects of metalepsis and the reason metaleptic transgressions unsettle the relationship between the reader and the text. Foremost amongst these may be Jean-Marie Schaeffer's evaluation, which suggests that metalepsis functions as an 'emblem' of the inherently bifurcating mental operation undertaken in any narrative immersion.[67] In a sense, Schaeffer claims, all narrative reception produces oscillation between immersion and distance, for readers are bound to their own present as well as the present that is made present in the narrative. Metalepsis inhibits any simple interpretation of the representative reality of the narrative world as a sub-world of the reader's own situation. According to Werner Wolf, this is because:

> Somewhere in the back of our minds we at the same time maintain a residual rational awareness of our true situation and the representational nature of [a narrative], which prevents us from attempting to enter the represented world…

[66] Malina, *Breaking the Frame*, p. 132.
[67] Jean-Marie Schaeffer, 'Métalepse et immersion fictionnelle' in *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation,* op. cit., pp. 323–334 (p.334). This is an idea also developed by Erwin Feyersinger, 'The Conceptual Integration Network of Metalepsis' in *Blending and the Study of Narrative: Approaches and Applications*, ed. by Ralf Schneider and Marcus Hartner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 173-197.

> metalepsis represents a paradoxical impossible violation of the borders of the fictional world and our own."[68]

The trajectory established by Schaeffer and Wolf is of philosophical consequence, for it suggests that the effects of metalepsis are born out of the tensions intrinsic to narrative and to art as objects that are at the same time real and yet also representative. Texts transfer and translate states of affairs from one distinct world into another – and this means that they necessarily confuse the representation and actuality that they seek to represent.

The ontological and psychological effects achieved in moments of metalepsis are afforded a wide array of causes. Douglas Hofstader, for example, offers useful insight into the mechanisms by which every presentation of reality within our own reality must function to an extent as a "strange loop." This is similar to the idea of Werner Wolf regarding "recurrent folds" that short circuit representation and reality.[69] Regardless of the precise language, understanding of the strangeness of recurrence and the inherent oddity created by destabilising representations contributes significant depth to the notion that metalepsis may be simultaneously immersive and distanciating: for these movements are not opposites, they are both consequences of the narrative process wherein the recasting of reality creates cognitive dissonance for the reader.[70] It is a distinct possibility that in the moment when the rigidity of the narrating threshold is transgressed the reader feels simultaneously that her own reality and that represented in story-world become contiguous or overlapping, whilst also developing a new awareness of her readerliness. The strange loop created in the merger of thresholds may therefore simultaneously obligate a sense of

[68] Wolf, *Aesthetic illusion*, p. 16.
[69] Cf. Hofstadter, *I am a strange loop*, p. 18 and Wolf, *Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial phenomenon*, p. 40.
[70] Genette notes these competing effects and suggests that metalepsis does not simply engage or distanciate the reader, rather it inevitably does both at the same time.

relatedness that emotionally engages the reader whilst equally creating a logical prohibition against wholesale immersion.

The process of potentially simultaneous engagement and distanciation may be caused by the collapse of the illusion of a narrative's claim to represent reality implicit in the contamination of temporalities and the blending of distinct worlds that occurs through metalepsis. This is essentially 'laying bare the device', a technique first described by Russian formalists (initially Victor Shklovsky) and latterly described by John Pier.[71] Essentially when any artistic device within narrative becomes noticeable, its perception highlights the artificial nature of the narrative which is revealed as a constructed 'form' (the text) which contains, but is not synonymous with 'material' (the events).[72] Pier contends that it is the overtness of the metaleptic paradox that challenges any previously naïve sense of narrative as a cogent and innocent presentation of reality. This is also McHale's contention when he describes metalepsis as "the foregrounding of violations of ontological boundaries."[73]

This introduces the possibility that within a moment of metalepsis the cause of the 'strange loop' and the effect (a 'strange loop') may, potentially, be the same thing: for the act of reading (or of narrating) removes the distinction between representation and reality. It is the sheer strangeness of the tension between representative acts and reality that produces diegetic, ontological and illocutionary thresholds, the contamination of which produces sheer strangeness in the tension between the representative act and reality in which it is 'laid bare.' In other words, foregrounding the strangeness of narrative thresholds increases self-consciousness

[71] Pier, 'Metalepsis', p. 339.
[72] Brian Richardson, *Narrative dynamics: essays on time, plot, closure, and frames* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002).
[73] McHale, *Postmodernist fiction,* p. 227.

of the boundary between narrative and reality, and causes the reader to wonder what reality even is “apart from its narration.”[74]

6. Synopsis

Metalepsis is a narrative strategy that challenges the hermeneutical process and muddles the threshold between reality and representation. Metaleptic movements allow words and phrases to have meaning and effect within apparently distinct interior narrative worlds and externally, in the world of the reader, which ought to remain logically separate and ontologically remote. Metalepsis facilitates an interoperability of characters, concepts and claims and transcends the normal thresholds that separate a stage and an audience, an artwork and a viewer or a narrative and its reader. It contains the capacity to confuse previous presumptions about the level of correspondence between elements of the textual world and the reader’s world. Metaleptic moments within narrative are effectively calculated errors that lay bare the process through which reading moves readers, through consideration of another’s world, into a review of their own, thus giving life to words and concepts within the reader’s own reality. Such occurrences within a narrative reveal the capacity inherent within a text to provoke readerly response and solicit self-involvement. The paradoxical contamination inherent within metalepsis necessarily magnifies the obligations that a text places upon a reader and/or the readerly effort required of them. When the primary diegesis and the universe of the characters within a narrative remain distinct and separable from the world of the reader, the narrative demands very little save its reading. Conversely, the narrative

[74] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, p. 94.

demands much more of the reader when it includes logic loops, self-referentiality between extra-diegetic and primary-diegetic worlds and transgressions between the world within the narrative and the world beyond. These devices place obligations upon readers to involve their own worlds within a co-ordinated, contaminated and coherent whole, or else to work harder than normal to disentangle the thresholds and distance the narrator and the narration from the narrated and the narratee. Metalepsis lays bare the ontological transgression that is embryonic in all reading through the illusion of representation whereby that which is represented is translated into the world of the other. As John Pier suggests,

> With metalepsis, it is the reader's belief, not disbelief that is suspended, setting up a reading contract based not on verisimilitude, but on a shared knowledge of illusion.[75]

In such moments of constative absurdity, metalepsis achieves performative force and demands a degree of self-awareness from the reader. Contaminations across the diegetic thresholds invite a highly self-involving "second naiveté" wherein the reader moves beyond accepting the illusion of representation toward a sense of the ontological inevitability of the shared universe that envelops both text and reader.[76]

I have already outlined in this chapter Genette's use of the term metalepsis, introduced a range of metaleptic movements within biblical narrative and illustrated the range of effects caused by such movements in a breadth of literary, dramatic and artistic forms. Transmedial studies illustrate the potential for profound effect upon the reader and even a cursory analysis establishes that these transgressions across story-telling thresholds are not infrequent across the full range of biblical narratives.

[75] Pier, *Metalepsis*, p. 193.
[76] Ricoeur contends that "if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naiveté through criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again." Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* p. 351.

This introduction establishes that metalepsis ought to be anticipated as a useful lens through which to illuminate the hermeneutical and theological consequences of transgression between narrative levels in the biblical text. Whilst in the last five years the total number of studies of metalepsis within the biblical narrative have grown, consideration of the interplay between representation and reality within the universe of biblical narrative is rarely explored. The hermeneutical implications and theological significance of the logic loops and short circuits created by metalepsis within the Bible are therefore the focus of this thesis.

Chapter 2 examines a range of approaches to biblical frame-breaking. First a number of approaches and applications explored by biblical scholars are examined. In addition a range of background concepts in the works of Erich Auerbach, Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Ricoeur are introduced for consideration in later theological and hermeneutical considerations. Auerbach's approach to realism and figuralism introduces questions regarding the tyranny of the biblical text. Kierkegaard's hermeneutics of transformation and his quest for interpretations that allow 'contemporaneity with Christ' are of particular resonance. Finally, Ricoeur's models of metaphor and self-hood and his analysis of the relationship between time and narrative are introduced. The language and conceptual frameworks developed by Auerbach, Kierkegaard and Ricoeur establish them as fundamental dialogue partners for subsequent discussions.

Chapters 3-6 develop close reading of four particular moments of metalepsis within the biblical narrative and add detail to the suggestion that transgressions across story-telling thresholds invite convergence between the world of the text and the world of the reader in the act of reading. The parenthetical appeal to the reader in Mark 13:14, "Let the Reader understand," is the first textual focus. The second is

the paradoxical humour of Job 19:23, wherein the author of the theodicy, bringing his own artistry into focus, transcribes Job's lament: "Oh, that my words were recorded." Chapter Five considers the confusion about which master it is who praises the dishonest steward in Luke 16:8a, which, at the ambiguous edge of a brief parable records that, "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly." Chapter Six explores the self-involved intervention of the narrator found throughout the Deuteronomistic History wherein the narrator notes that a phenomenon persists "To this day." In each of these readings explanations for the 'strangeness' of the narrative are developed in relation to metalepsis. I suggest that the inclusion of the narrator or the reader within the frame of the text; evidence of self-referential narratological humour; intentional confusion between narrative levels and the acknowledgement of the subjective stance of the narrator are best explained as components of an interior hermeneutic within biblical narrative that is founded on the presumption of God's omni-diegetic constancy and is geared towards self-involved reception.

In Chapter 7 I develop theological conclusions, stemming from the observation that metalepsis, as well as producing a range of effects beyond the text, also reveals a profound inner-biblical hermeneutic behind the text. This discovery provokes important consideration regarding the nature of biblical narrative, the theological significance of self-involvement and God's own self-involvement in human story. The final chapter starts from the following inferences and explores the significance of these in regard to a theology of the self and the church.

1. Inner-biblical diegetic frame-breaking derives from the conviction that God is omni-diegetic and that time has no right to separate the past of the text from the present of the reader: for God is recalcitrantly transcendent. The

frequency of metalepsis within biblical narrative suggests that this belief is fundamental to the truth claims within biblical narrative, which are ultimately less about history than about God's unfailing presence across and within narrated history, its telling and future reception. Through the confusion of boundaries and frames, biblical narrative keeps one eye on its own reception under the conviction that God's character assures a future which is as meaningful as the past narrated events. As God is unchanging, and the world is an unfolding continuum, biblical narrative presupposes a consistency between previous, present and future revelation.

2. The purpose of biblical narrative is not therefore ultimately about rendering sequence accurately, but about representing its meaning plainly, or even, revealing it plainly to be meaningful. Through the self-involved faith statements of narrators who describe their own day, who highlight key moments for their readers, who joke about their own artistry and muddle inner and extra-biblical audiences, biblical narrative lays claim to the future. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Bethlehem, Gethsemane and Golgotha is also God of every reader's present: not just because of what has been done in history, but because of the providence that extends throughout the hermeneutical cycle. When God is found by a reader in the narrative-history of the biblical text, his existence ceases to be an exclusively historical phenomenon because his presence becomes present for the reader. It is not that the reader somehow enters the time-frame of the narrative, becoming contemporary with Peter or Paul, but that God reveals himself to be always becoming contemporary in the lives of his creatures. The full freight of Salvation History (*Heilsgeschichte*) encourages conviction that God's

presence may be known in the reader's present. It results in a narrative replete with confidence in God's character despite the complexity of time. His agency in the past also necessarily assures his presence in the future, no matter how far outside the frame of the narrative.

3. The supreme sovereignty of God over the span of history covers even the subjectivity and limitations of readers and narrators. Indeed the liminal narrator, who locates her/himself on both sides of diegetic boundaries, is able to declare God's grace and mercy with confidence because of his human condition, the limit of his horizon and the confusion caused by his entangled self-involvement, not despite it. Subjectivity and self-involvement do not preclude revelatory speech, rather they are legitimated in the self-referentiality of the absolute. God, in defining himself as "I am who I am" declares that in relation to his unchangeable character, the subjective self is a legitimate participant in the process of revelation. YHWH's self and Moses' self, Jesus' self and John's self all share in the revelatory process. It would thus be surprising if narrators sought to hide their own 'selves' or presumed that lordship over diegetic boundaries was their own. To the contrary the location of the self within the continuum into which God speaks and invites response is a fundamental aspect of creatureliness and a sacramental gift. The voice, the perspective and the stance of the story-teller are therefore not subjects of embarrassment.

I will particularly focus these explorations of theological consequence in response to Auerbach's provocative consideration of textual totalitarianism and the recursion of history; Kierkegaard's quest for 'absolute contemporaneity' and Ricoeur's model of narrative identity (though Rowan Williams is also of particular significance). I will use

these dialogue partners to explain the significance of the overt self-involving demands, the reckless disregard for normative ontological and locutionary boundaries and the frequently inconsistent approach to temporality and transcendence found in biblical narrative. I contend that in moments of biblical metalepsis notions of narrative tyranny, hermeneutical authenticity and human identity converge: for the biblical narrator transgresses diegetic thresholds to amplify transmissibility and shape the reality of the reader. Biblical metalepsis is a creedal declaration of the immutable transcendence of providence, the triumph of meaning over chronology and the unfailing urgency of 'now'.

Metaleptic moments afford evidence of an inner-biblical hermeneutic that may be best understood in relation to ideas of tyranny, transcendence and contemporaneity. Synthesis of these ideas helps to explain the significance of readerly self-involvement that is demanded by the collapse of inner-biblical frames. Furthermore it yields provocative theological considerations regarding reality, representation, the role of the narrator, the boundaries around the self and the involvement of God in the muddle of human discourse.

All that follows in this thesis is therefore a movement from observation regarding a range of biblical metalepses, through the suggestion that metalepsis is an essential rather than auxiliary feature of the narrative, towards consideration of the hermeneutical significance of such moments, assessment of the theological implications and development of a theological anthropology. This thesis is not an attempt to reinvent a first-level hermeneutic or suggest a 'new way' of reading biblical narrative, nor is it an attempt to assert theological conclusions on the basis of minor textual anomalies. I am interested in the sense that moments of metalepsis illustrate a consistent theological conviction, shared by many biblical narrators,

that the normal boundaries between their own world and the story worlds of which they told were entirely permeable. This belief is not held because of the narrators' location as infallible observers, but because of God's consistent and sustained presence in the story world, their own world and the world of their anticipated reader. The self-involved voices of biblical narrators are therefore figures who, through the loops of logic and metaleptic muddles they create, open the reader to new possibilities regarding God's own involvement and the constitution of the reader's own self.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

1. Introduction

Within the field of Biblical Studies there are a very limited number of works that employ the notion of metalepsis to explain exegetical or hermeneutical problems. Nevertheless this number is increasing, and moreover, since this work was started the number of useful studies has continued growing. Notable consideration regarding moments of frame-breaking are found in formative works by Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg, Shimon Bar-Efrat and Jerome Walsh. Whilst using divergent language, Alter, Sternberg, Bar-Efrat and Walsh each describe frame-breaking processes and acknowledge the significance of such moments within broader analysis of the purposefulness of biblical narrative. More recently Christopher Paris has offered a comprehensive analysis of 'narrative obtrusion'. Paris' work is one of a very limited number of studies that are fully focused on frame-breaking, intrusion or obtrusion.[1] Cumulatively these studies illustrate both the significance of metaleptic movement within Biblical narrative and also the relative scarcity of specific comment on metalepsis. Application of Genette's narratological model remains limited amongst biblical scholars. Indeed, only a handful of studies may be cited. These include Anja Cornils' work on Luke-Acts; Ryan Schellenberg's on Lucan parables; Douglas Estes' on Temporal Mechanics in John's Gospel; Ilse Muellner's consideration of liturgical movement within Deuteronomy, and a collection of essays in *Über die Grenze* edited by Ute E Eisen and Peter von Möllendorff.

[1] Steven Sheeley's work also fits into this category. He has offered rigorous review of 'narrative asides' in Luke-Acts: Steven M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, No. 72, (London: A&C Black, 1992). If space allowed, further attention could also be afforded to Adele Berlin and Susan Slater. Berlin notes that, "Narrators may step out of the frame of the story ideologically as well as temporally, as the Deuteronomic narrator frequently does." Adele Berlin, *Poetics and interpretation of Biblical narrative,* Vol. 9. (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 59. Susan Slater has examined obtrusive comments in Deuteronomy: Susan Slater, "*I have set the land before you": A study of the rhetoric of Deuteronomy 1-3*, (McGill University PhD diss., 1991).

Analysis of these contributions to biblical scholarship follow below. Significantly more important to my own study, however, are a range of conceptual themes explored in the works of three primary dialogue partners, Erich Auerbach, Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Ricoeur, whose works offer a breadth of conceptual scaffolding through which theologically to interpret the threshold between the world within biblical narrative and that beyond it. I have chosen to locate my study in reference to the work of Erich Auerbach as his writing offers a complex consideration of realism, figuralism and, through these lenses, the relationship between the temporality of the biblical text and that of the reader. Auerbach's work is a source of significant stimulus for consideration of the subordination of the reader's worldview to the claims made within the biblical depiction of reality. Auerbach describes this subordination as an integral aspect of the autocracy and tyrannical force of the 'elohistic form'.[2] Whilst agreeing with Auerbach that the Bible invites the subsummation of the reader's worldview, I am not convinced that it is the particularity of the Bible's form or literary style that achieves this effect. Rather, I identify this process as an inevitable outcome of the time-span of biblical narrative (covering creation to consummation) and the concomitant sense that the reader's own space and time are contiguous or connected with that described within the text. I suggest that these presumptions underpin biblical metalepsis and that biblical narrative encourages the reader to locate her world in relation to the diegesis in a manner that his highly comparable to other metaleptic texts that claim to represent reality.

My engagement with Søren Kierkegaard focuses on his concern that many of the interpretative models employed within the Christian Church tend to create an

[2] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western literature, Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition with a new introduction by Edward W. Said*, trans. by Willlard R. Trask (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 14.

interpretative distance between what is written and what is read. In his endeavour to reverse this trend Kierkegaard suggested that readers should 'leap' into the world of the narrative and allow themselves to be transformed by its claims. I suggest this manner of self-involvement may be one of the hermeneutical consequences of biblical metalepsis: for when the involvement of the narrator muddles diegetic boundaries it may also be that the reader is invited to a concomitant transgression or 'leap'. Kierkegaard develops this model through the idea of readerly contemporaneity with the world of the narrative, and builds this idea through exploration of repetition, imitation and appropriation. Each of these concepts resonate significantly with the understanding I develop in chapters 3-6 regarding the effect of biblical metalepsis.

Paul Ricoeur echoes, develops and responds to a number of decidedly Kierkegaardian themes.[3] For example Ricoeur and Kierkegaard both emphasise the dialectic between explanation and understanding, both are concerned with the transition from text to action and both encourage readers to make personal things that were previously 'foreign'. However whilst Kierkegaard supposes that biblical hermeneutics are safeguarded by a reader's acceptance of her own subjectivity and by God's involvement in the unveiling of meaning, Ricoeur's model is one aspect of his complex and comprehensive framework regarding the symbolism of language and the significance of self-understanding. For Ricoeur, self-understanding is the

[3] The significance of Kierkegaard's influence within Ricoeur's wrting has been the subject of increasing scholarship in recent years. Joel D.S. Rasmussen, for example, notes: "What is sometimes acknowledged but not frequently addressed in the now-burgeoning scholarship on Ricoeur is the depth of his engagement with the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. On one hand, this is understandable. Viewed proportionally with respect to his entire authorship, Ricoeur's explicit reflections on Kierkegaard's writings might seem rather meager. On the other hand, a simple word count hardly passes for careful reading, and it is surely telling that when Ricoeur in specific essays does set Kierkegaard in express conversation with more obviously influential figures like Kant and Hegel, it is Kierkegaard who generally gets the last word." Joel D.S. Rasmussen, 'Paul Ricoeur: On Kierkegaard, the Limits of Philosophy, and the Consolation of Hope', in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy-Francophone: Philosophy: Tome II,* ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) pp. 233-256 (p. 233).

most significant pre-requisite for, and is the most meaningful an outcome of, the interpretative process. For the sake of the present study, three of Ricoeur's themes are particularly useful. Firstly, the three stages in his model of mimesis afford a useful lens through which to consider the temporal paradox suggested by metalepsis. He suggests that the 'prefigured' world is 'configured' within texts which, in their reading invite a 'refiguration' of the world through the imagination of a future-present. In this threefold model, Ricoeur emphasises "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader" and he suggests this threshold invites refiguration in the life of the reader. [4] In parallel with this he develops a model of the narrative constitution of selfhood, which is a second significant theme for this study. Ricoeur suggests that personal identity is always formulated through narrative and that the discourse between personal testimony and the attestation of others allows an individual to understand themselves as a self among selves, and to take responsibility for their actions. This model is a crucial to my considerations of the relationship between the selfhood of biblical narrators and biblical readers. A third theme of particular value to my understanding of biblical metalepsis is Ricouer's work on metaphor. Ricoeur explains metaphor as an irrational juxtaposition of terms which, in combination, allow the synthesis of new meaning. Given that metalepsis is the irrational juxtaposition of different diegetic levels, my explorations of the theological significance of biblical metalepsis extend from Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor, and his repeated focus on the significance of 'hermeneutical knots' as a departure point for complex double sense, concealment and disclosure that occur in the transgression of diegetic frames.

[4] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Volume 1* (Chicago: Chicago University Press), p. 71

The relationship between each of these dialogue partners is evidently a complicated one, for whilst each focuses on the relationship between the world of the reader and that of the biblical text, their hermeneutical models offer overlapping and/or competing claims. For example where Auerbach notes that "Scriptural stories … seek to subject us", Kierkegaard goes further still, emphasising the reader's own responsibility in this process.[5] He suggests that it is "a dreadful untruth to admire the truth instead of following it."[6] It is his contention that subjugation is not a subtle ploy, rather it is the only proper response to the life revealed within the text. It is a 'leap' that the reader must make upon hearing the clear invitation of the Bible.

Paul Ricoeur in some ways represents an interpretative approach that is diametrically opposed to Kierkegaard's post-Kantian quest for un-critical contemporaneity, and in many ways he and Kierkegaard represent seemingly irreconcilable interpretative positions.[7] My intent is not to reconcile their approaches. Rather, whilst predominantly holding them in counterpoint, I suggest that in the moment of metalepsis, biblical narrative both drives the reader away from the naïve realism that was criticised by Paul Ricoeur and, simultaneously, pulls them into the new level of self-referentiality and engagement that was encouraged by Søren Kierkegaard. It is my contention that, whilst the critical maturity advanced by Ricoeur and the sense of subjectivity lauded by Kierkegaard represent opposite hermeneutical imperatives, frame-breaking moments within the Biblical narrative

[5] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 15.
[6] Søren Kierkegaard, 'Followers, not Admirers' in *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, ed. by Charles E. Moore (New York: Orbis, 2002), p. 89.
[7] Although a number of recent studies have noted the surprising similarity between Kiekegaard and Kant. Cf. Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*, (SUNY, 1992).Green suggests for example that with regard to the religious significance of faith, "not only was Kierkegaard's discussion organized like Kant's, but at many points it almost seemed as though, without acknowledgement, Kierkegaard had lifted words, phrases, or ideas from Kant" (p xi). Edward Mooney even suggests that "Kierkegaard understood and assimilated more of Kant than anyone has hitherto suspected."

may achieve both effects at the same time. Temporal loops and shifting diegetic frames may simultaneously draw the reader into a sense that they share a space-time continuum with that represented within the narrative and may also make them aware that actions within the primary diegesis are mediated by the voice and the perspective of a subjective mediating interlocutor. Engagement and alienation, critical interpretative distance and self-involved subjectivity may be equal products of metalepsis in biblical narrative, just as they are in the *Verfremdungseffekt* of Brechtian dramaturgy, in a viewer's appreciation of illusion in art, and the apostrophe in classical rhetoric or modern novels. What each prohibit or restrict is a passive or two dimensional approach to representation which supposes that any primary diegesis may be meaningfully understood to present the reality of 'what actually happened' to a distant reader inhabiting a voyeuristic vantage-point.

In chapters three to six below, I suggest that the transgression of diegetic frames within the Biblical narrative is an outstanding illustration of the way in which the Bible makes claims upon the reader and her world. Erich Auerbach, Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Ricoeur each offer a depth of perspective regarding the phenomenon. For each the threshold between the narrative and the reader is central theme, and my exploration of the transgression of this threshold brings their diverse hermeneutical approaches into play with one another, and also with Gennete's model of narratology. Auerbach offers a literary landscape through which to understand the significance of the Bible's claim to authority over the life and the worldview of the reader. Kierkegaard offers criticism of those who seek critical distance without acknowledging the personal invitation to transformation that is solicited by the text. Ricoeur offers a model for interpretation that overcomes the first naïvety of the reader whilst offering a philosophical basis for the narrative configuration of the self.

Before exploring these concepts and developing my own analysis of the significance of Auerbach, Kierkegaard and Ricoeur, I first turn attention toward the aforementioned studies of Alter, Sternberg, Bar-Efrat, Paris and Walsh as well as the exegetical studies of Cornils, Schellenberg, Estes, Muellner and Eisen. These studies ground my engagement with Auerbach, Kierkegaard and Ricoeur within the continuum of biblical interpretation and contextualise my subsequent analysis of biblical metalepsis.

2. Biblical Frame-breaking

2.1 Narrative Art

Robert Alter's magnum opus, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981) urged special consideration of narratorial anomalies whereby the normally laconic mode of narration morphs into disquisition. His contention is that such narrative inconsistency should be understood as interpretative fulcrums rather than idiomatic absurdities:

> Against this norm, we should direct special attention to those moments when the illusion of unmediated action is manifestly shattered. Why at a particular juncture does the narrator break the time-frame of his story to insert a piece of expository information in the pluperfect tense, or jump forward to the time of his contemporary audience? Why does he pause to make a summarizing statement about the condition of a character? Why at certain points is the regular rapid tempo of narration slowed down to take in the details of a kind for which in general no time is allowed? A willingness to wonder… will help make us better readers of the biblical tales.[8]

Alter's impact upon biblical scholarship has been immense and sustained. Even in asking these questions he legitimated the development of *narrative criticism* and a gradual movement away from "the flattening effect of some historical scholarship."[9] Alter's work helped move biblical studies away from the obsessive 'excavative ends'

[8] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 185.
[9] Ibid., p. 23

of form critics whose exegeses dominated much of the 20th Century, towards an understanding of the complex artistry implicit within biblical narration. Indeed, Alter suggests that through complex interactions across thresholds, juggling inconsistencies and anomalies, biblical narrators consistently display "dazzling virtuosity in their arabesques of sound play and syntax, wordplay and image." [10]

As would be expected Alter explores a range of narrative intrusions, including omniscient comments, adjustment in narrative stance and proleptic plot reveals. He suggests that such moments reveal the text to be "a kind of colloquy (the author speaking, the reader thinking back) between him and us."[11] Though he never uses the term, Alter's consideration of anomalies within biblical narrative opens a doorway to a deeper appreciation of the art and the significance of moments of metalepsis.

Meir Sternberg meaningfully developed a number a similar ideas to Alter in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (1987), which remains one of the most significant explorations of the narratological mechanisms within biblical literature. He offers an exceptional analysis of the range of narratorial processes within the Hebrew Bible and explores the range of theological question prompted by these processes.[12] Of particular relevance to this study are Sternberg's conclusion about ambiguity and intrusion. Sternberg notes that the text frequently leaves notions of divine agency to the reader's imagination and, through omission demands active interpretation from the reader.

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[10] Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 54-55.
[11] Ibid., p. 15.
[12] Meir Sternberg, *The poetics of biblical narrative: Ideological literature and the drama of reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). "Is it that the narrator assumes omniscience because he could not otherwise do justice to an infallible God and impress on the reader, by appropriate suppressions, his own fallibility? Since the Omniscient inspires his prophets, moreover, does the narrator implicitly appeal to the gift of prophecy, so as to speak with redoubled authority as divine historian?" Ibid., p. 102.

> The story-teller's instrumental approach to intrusion accordingly explains not only his activity as commentator but also its limits, and not only his commissions but his omissions as well… In short [narrative intrusion] serves the Bible's art of ambiguity.[13]

Sternberg's model suggests that intrusions are one aspect of a narratorial pragmatism which governs the narrator's interventions. He surveys a range of strategies within the text, and includes intrusions as one of a number of interventions that are all employed by the narrator to legitimate the truth claims of the text. He says:

> Were the narrative written or read as fiction, the God would turn from the lord of history into a creature of the imagination, with the most disastrous results.[14]

Sternberg's sense of the clear purpose of the biblical narrator's role and, indeed, the language of 'intrusion' is also found in Shimon Bar-Efrat's, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (1989) which offers valuable focus upon moments of transgressions across narrative boundaries. Bar-Efrat suggests that in such moments:

> A double structure is created within the narrative: in addition to the stratum of events, which is the main one, there is the stratum of the narrator, who stands forward as the intermediary between the world of the narrative and us.[15]

In Bar-Efrat's model, instances of overt narrative comment are best understood as incursions through which the narrator seeks to "ensure that every reader will grasp the full significance of the narrative in the same way that the narrator does."[16] Bar-Efrat concludes that the effect of these incursions is to undermine the illusion of a reader's unmediated access to history and "to create a distance and reduce the reader's emotional involvement."[17] Consequently, he imagines that they must have been kept to a minimum and he suggests that the narrator's voice in the biblical text

[13] Ibid., p. 122
[14] Ibid., p. 32.
[15] Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative art in the Bible,* (London: A&C Black, 1989), p.24.
[16] *Loc. cit.*
[17] Ibid., p. 31.

steers between interventions that ensure desired interpretations and a covert presence that directs discreetly:

> The less the narrators existence is felt, the less aware we are of the fact that someone is mediating between us and the events, and the less we sense that someone is selecting and interpreting them for us… This indeed is the method adopted by narrators in the Bible [so as] not to impair the illusion of reality.[18]

The particular value of Bar-Efrat's analysis is that he affords extended attention to the effects of the narratorial interventions. Bar-Efrat's work triggers consideration of the conventions of readership and the capacity of the narrative voice to affect the reception of the narrative. This theme is well developed in Christopher Paris' considered evaluation of the role of the narrator as a mediator as revealed through 'frame-breaking' movements in the Hebrew Bible.[19] He draws similar conclusions to Alter, Sternberg and Bar-Efrat, contending that intervention in the primary diegesis is a deliberate strategy to guide readers in their interpretations and understanding of the narrative.

> The narrator forcefully enters a narrative to reshape the text and sculpt the response of the reader… Obtrusions prevent the reader from arriving at an unacceptable conclusion.[20]

Paris gives a number of examples wherein the narrator forecloses 'potentially unwelcome interpretative avenues'. In Genesis 22:1, for example, the narrator discloses proleptically that the coming narrative is a test of Abraham's character. This limits the reader's interpretative horizon regarding Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac: it demands that his actions are seen as demonstrations of faithfulness and that God is not seen as sanctioning child-sacrifice. Another example

[18] Ibid., p. 32.
[19] Christopher T. Paris, *Narrative Obtrusion in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2014).
[20] Ibid., p. 2.

cited by Paris is Judges 14:4 when the narrator privileges the reader with information not otherwise unveiled in the course of the story, explaining that,

> [Samson's] father and mother did not know that [his desire for a Philistine wife] was from the Lord; for he was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines. (Judges 14:4)

Paris describes such examples as obtrusions (rather than intrusions), and suggests that they represent atypical attempts to 'force a particular perspective,' to 'pre-emptively respond to a question or assumption' or 'to lesson theological tension by filling a gap.'[21] The interventions he describes cover a spectrum of 'overtness' and 'obtrusiveness' and could almost as easily be defined by the more common 'intrusion.' Nevertheless as obtrusion implies 'pressing onto' and intrusion 'pressing into', the nuance of 'obtrusion' may be the more appropriate, especially given Paris' observations that the explanatory comments seek specifically to assert a metanarrative interpretation onto some otherwise ambiguous series of events. In particular Paris suggests that all the incursions he observes serve to grant ultimate agency to God, where otherwise this might be in doubt.[22] Thus Paris offers a model for transgressions between the interior worlds of the text, that focuses on the narrator's role. His suggestion is that the extra-diegetical universe dominates the landscape of the biblical text to such an extent that where the normally laconic narrator sees it as necessary, he freely transgresses the structures of his own story to speak into either the primary diegesis or even the world of the reader.

Jerome T. Walsh has offered useful insights regarding frame-breaks and their effect in both *Style & Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (2001) and *Old Testament narrative: A guide to interpretation* (2010). In both he analyses how 'point

[21] Ibid., p. 169.
[22] For example 1 Samuel 26:12, where Saul falls into a deep sleep and 1 Kings 12:15, where Rehoboam is prevented from listening to the people.

of view' and 'narrative voice' shift frequently in some Old Testament texts. He explores the significance of such modulations and goes slightly further than Alter, Sternberg or Bar-Efrat in his consideration of the 'frame-breaking' effect of these interventions:

> Sometimes the narrator will, so to speak, step out of the flow of the narrative to address the reader directly; the technical term for this is 'breaking frame,' and it changes the narrator's voice from that of a story-teller to that of a commentator on the story. [23]

Walsh notes that frame-breaking movements and shifts in narratological stance carry inherent capacity to shape or unsettle readers' reception.[24] He also succeeds in connecting the simultaneous effects of reflective-responsibility and hermeneutical distanciation with the confusion between the time frame surrounding the story world and that surrounding the reader's own world. This simple observation is developed by Walsh into a considered exploration of the difference between the timeframe of the story world and the present moment of the reader:

> The voice that tells the story has suddenly emerged from the background and spoken out on its own. This reminds the narratee that he is listening to a story, not witnessing something that is actually happening in the moment.[25]

Cumulatively, Alter, Sternberg and Bar-Efrat argue that biblical narrators intervene and intrude into the primary-diegesis as rarely as possible. Paris posits a somewhat freer approach to diegetic transgressions and Walsh develops a clear sense of the purposefulness and the effect of such frame-breaking, quite beyond 'forcing a perspective' or 'fore-closing' interpretative avenues.

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[23] Jerome T. Walsh, *Style & Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 125.

[24] Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament narrative: A guide to interpretation* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010) "As a narrative device, breaking frame …interjects material not immediately pertinent to the development of the plot… and invites reflection and judgment. Second, breaking frame foregrounds the presence of the narrator much more than is the usual case for biblical narrative" (p. 100).

[25] *Loc. cit.*

Alter, Sternberg and Bar-Efrat have contributed immeasurably to understanding of narrative art in the Bible, but it may be that they have exaggerated the economy of the biblical narrator and overstated the threat to a mimetic depiction of reality represented by the narrator's incursions into his narrative. Indeed, I suggest that the intrusions meaningfully identified by these scholars are an integral feature of the continuum of biblical narrative. A brief survey reveals that: from Genesis to II Chronicles, reference to the narrator's own context through the formula "To this day" interrupts the primary diegesis more than fifty times (Chapter six below); Ezra and Nehemiah move frequently from third to first person narration without logical explanation; in the texts of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Habakkuk the prophets all refer to themselves in the first person, significantly muddling a reader's sense of the narrative stance; Mark's Gospel appeals directly to the reader ("Let the reader understand"); Luke includes himself and his reader within his Gospel and in Acts ("My dear Theophilus"); John intervenes frequently in his own story ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and "These are written that you may believe") and the seer in Revelation constantly foregrounds himself ("I, John").

Evidently narratorial intrusions are a prodigious and significant component of the actuality expressed and contained within the biblical text, to the extent that the reality of the narrator and even the reader ought to be understood as a part of the biblical model of reality – rather than the threat to its coherence that has sometimes been suggested. I contend that a sense of the narrator's presence within her own narrative is an evitable consequence of her intervention in the story, and the more overt the narratorial intervention, the more the role of the interlocutor is felt within the story. Such presence is provocatively paradoxical for it muddles the thresholds between narrative and reception and between telling and told. It evidences an inner-

biblical hermeneutic and strains the temporal boundaries of the text. The self-involvement of the narrator is a revelation of an internal model of interpretation and is a declaration of divine sovereignty over time. Focus upon interventions as a deliberate strategy and a component of narrative artistry is genuinely useful, but consideration of the intrinsic hermeneutic that is laid bare, and theological significance of such moments may be even more theologically significant.

2.2 Exegetical Studies

Anja Cornils' 2005 exploration of the 'We' passages in Luke-Acts (Chapter 1, 3.1 above) represents the first significant attempts to explain biblical frame-breaking through Genette's model of metalepsis.[26] Her contention was that in Acts the movement from a hetero-diegetic to a homo-diegetic narrative stance represented by the "we" passages was a strategy that sought to add credibility to the whole narrative. She concludes that the employment of the trope is deliberate, effective and indicative of the rhetorical artistry involved in the creation of the text. Her contention is that critical evaluation of this technique brings the genuineness of the 'we' narratives into question and reveals the potential 'fictionality' of the narrative, for these pericopae are revealed to be quite conscious attempts to add power, credibility and authority through personal witness. Cornils' position is repeated by a number of commentators, and seems to be broadly accepted, as is evident in this summary:

> The narrator appears in this 'we' as an anonymous companion, his primary characteristic being that he accompanies Paul on some of his journeys. That is the prime function of this 'we': it replaces the narrator in the diegesis. As a figure, he experiences the events as an eyewitness and thus lays claim to the authority of someone who has seen something personally. This procedure was very successful. Even today this narrative is received in this way, namely

[26] Cornils' work has received little more than passing citation, and has not to date prompted wider study of the metaleptic effects of overt narrative intervention or inconsistency of stance.

> as an authentic eyewitness account. With Genette, we can also call this narrative procedure 'metalepsis'.[27]

Cornils' analysis is valuable, and there can be little doubt that the inconsistency of the narrative voice delaminates the narrative structure, collapsing the framework between the primary and extra-diegetic layers. Nevertheless her conclusion, that Luke's metaleptic transgressions are self-conscious attempts to add credibility are unproven, and it is distinctly possible that such transgressions are derived from the narrator's genuine sense of the permeability between the worlds of the extra and primary diegesis. There seems little traction therefore in the suggestion that the rhetorical benefit of movement between diegetic levels is necessarily "un signe de narration fictionnelle."[28]

Ryan Schellenberg's essay, 'Which Master? Whose Steward? Metalepsis and Lordship in the Parable of the Prudent Steward' (2008), has suggested that metalepsis is the best explanation for the confusion found in Luke 16:1-13.[29] Schellenberg remains unique in his employment of metalepsis as an explanation for a particularly difficult exegesis. He suggests that "The surprising intrusion into the parable of a *kyrios* who approves of debt relief compels the parable's audience to reconsider their own loyalties and vindicates the debt relief scheme of the prudent steward."[30]

Schellenberg's example is one I take up in greater fullness in chapter five (below), and so I will not rehearse his argument or my response here. However, it is

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[27] Ute E. Eisen, 'The Narratological Fabric of the Gospels', in *Narratology beyond literary criticism: mediality, disciplinarity*, ed. by Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt and Wilhelm Schernus (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 195-212 (p. 201).
[28] Cornils, 'La métalepse', p. 107.
[29] Ryan S. Schellenberg, 'Which Master? Whose Steward? Metalepsis and Lordship in the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Lk. 16.1-13)', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 30, no. 3 (2008), pp. 263-288.
[30] Ibid., p. 263.

worth noting Schellenberg's arguments for the application of Genette's model to a biblical text. He suggested that Luke's consistent attempts to surprise his readers and to confound their expectations, coupled with his consistent employment of embedded narratives, mean that metalepsis should be expected (amongst other rhetorical tools) as "salient features of Luke's compositional technique."[31] Certainly it could be expected, therefore, that Luke's gospel might be amongst the biblical narratives most likely to self-consciously muddle diegetic levels and break the frames surrounding the embedded parables within the narrative.

Schellenberg's article focused narrowly on interpretation of one parable, and as a consequence it has not had the attention that might be expected for so novel an approach to a 'tricky' parable. Schellenberg's essay has been cited in 11 works since he wrote, but nine of those are narrowly focussed on the same parable or other similar Lucan examples. The only two studies which offer extrapolation of Schellenberg's axiomatic suggestions are found in works focused on rhetorical strategies in Luke's Gospel.[32]

In a number of very recent works Ute E. Eisen has established herself as a notable commentator on biblical metalepsis.[33] Her particular focus has been the Gospel of John but her editorship of *Über die Grenze, Metalepse in Text- und Bildmedien des Altertums* has brought together a number of meaningful contributions on Ancient metalepsis including articles on the Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, Rabbinic Midrash and the Passover narrative of Exodus 12.[34] Her most significant contribution is her analysis of the complexities of the narratorial situation within Johannine

[31] Ibid., p. 265.
[32] Cf. Lauri Thurén, *Parables Unplugged: Reading the Lukan Parables in Their Rhetorical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2014) and Keith A. Reich, *Figuring Jesus: the power of rhetorical figures of speech in the Gospel of Luke*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
[33] Eisen, 'Metalepsis in the Gospel of John', pp. 318-345.
[34] Ibid.

narrative. She suggests that the inconsistency between the role of the "Beloved Disciple" and the framing narratives ("We" in John 1:14 and "I" in John 21:24) reveal the reception-orientation of the narrative and illustrate the rhetorical toolkit employed by the narrator. She says:

> It could be shown that metalepses can also be detected in the canonical gospels according to Mark and John and in the Lucan double work. We find top-down and bottom-up apostrophes as well as merging/blending of narrative voices. The strategy in the Gospel according to John, where the third-person narrator is simultaneously a character in the story, is a special form of very subtle metalepsis. All these metalepses are rhetorical because they have no consequences for the plot. In the case of the Johannine narrative the question of the narrator's location is answered by the character Jesus in the story: "What is that to you?" (John 21:22). Thus the narrator cannot be questioned by his readers either, and he is exempt from any kind of criticism.[35]

Of particular value is Eisen's capacity to weave the comments of previous exegetes into her thesis. She builds upon Josef Blank's understanding of Johannine theology as a "theology of making-present"[36] and acknowledges the value of Alan Culpepper's insights that included observation of metalepsis in the text without naming it, describing instead moments which "move the reader into the scene so that even though it is told in the course of narrating the past, readers feel that they are in the scene."[37] Eisen offers a range of examples to justify her conclusion that in the canonical gospels and in Acts metalepsis "fuses into one presence" the frontier of the story and the world of narration. She ultimately concludes that the diegetic layers in John's Gospel are considerably more permeable than in the other gospels and that the function of metalepsis and meta-narration in John is to defend the Gospel's own truth claim by appeal to the narrator as an eye-witness.

[35] Ibid., p. 342.
[36] Cf. Josef Blank, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag,1986), p. 24.
[37] Cf. Alan R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A study in Literary Design* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 31.

> The Lukan double work, rather, aimed at defending the reliability (ἀσφάλεια) of its gospel's own diegesis in competition with the "many" others (Luke 1:1). The Gospel according to Mark, probably the oldest gospel, does not yet contain comparable self-referential passages. But readers are also directly addressed by subtle metaleptic strategies, whereby the readers are more powerfully drawn into the events and the message of Jesus so that they become involved.[38]

Eisen is convincing and her focus on the "theology of attestation and making-present" is enhanced through understanding of Johannine metalepsis. However, Eisen seems to exaggerate the distinction between John's metaleptic methods and those in other gospels and I remain unconvinced that a purely 'rhetorical' metalepsis is even possible.[39]

A unique work by Douglas Estes in 2008 focused on the temporal mechanics of John's Gospel and the inconsistent sense of time evidenced in the Gospel's composition.[40] Estes introduces the notion of metalepsis in the Gospel as follows:

> Instead of possessing two pure, integral and distinct worlds, the Fourth Gospel comprises several worlds – most notably the witness and epic worlds – that are conflated, fractional and entangled. We can refer to the conflation of multiple diegetic worlds that exist in the Fourth Gospel as *metalepsis.*[41]

Estes suggests that metalepses arise because the entangled narrative worlds within the Gospel are highly unstable.[42] Estes identifies the temporal world of John's Gospel as an amalgamation created by a range of metaleptic mechanisms including statements with indefinite temporalities, repetitions of lexical particulars across distinct narrative worlds, cross-over between eye-witness and omniscient perspectives. Each of these mechanisms is worthy of attention before Estes' conclusion is considered.

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[38] Eisen, 'Metalepsis in the Gospel of John', p. 344.
[39] All metalepses, in the act of reading, achieve a contamination between worlds (section 1 above).
[40] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics.*
[41] Ibid., p. 241
[42] This is because the Johannine narrator "speaks into two worlds: the worlds of the testimonies about the Johannine Jesus and the world of the early Christian communities for whom the life of Jesus is the foundational epic." Ibid., p. 243

Indefinite temporalities are identified by Estes as an entrenched feature of John's narrative, and are found in those moments when it is conspicuously ambiguous in which diegetic world an action is taking place, such as in John 2:17. Having witnessed him cleanse the temple, "[Jesus'] disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." Estes' primary example of lexical repetition is the Johannine employment of 'signs' across the 'epic world', the 'witness world', and the narrative segments (e.g. 2:11; 2:16; 6:2). He also notes the terms 'disciple', 'Christ' and 'witness' amongst the most important of these signifiers: "[these] trans-world lexical repetitions disrupt the ontological boundaries between the two temporal worlds and prohibit most attempts at diegetic partitioning."[43] Movement between eye-witness and omniscient perspectives is noticed by Estes on occasions when the testimonial vantage point is an inadequate stance from which to project an external perspective. Examples include the Johannine narrator's claims to know Jesus' mind and to comprehend substantially more than the disciples (for example John 2:24-25 and 20:8-9). Estes' conclusion is that "metaleptic conflation of the two Johannine worlds exists on the deepest level of narrativity and cannot be disentangled by the modern reader."[44] He argues cogently that metaleptic blending in John's Gospel illustrates the narrator's need to overcome the inevitable limitations implicit within narrative as a medium, and that metalepsis is one of the creative ways in which the narrator seeks to overcome 'narrative restrictions' and achieve trans-world referentiality so that omni-temporal truth claims may be asserted.

[43] Ibid., p. 244.
[44] Ibid., p. 248

One final study that merits particular attention is Ilse Muellner's 2014 article, *Celebration and Narration. Metaleptic features in Ex 12:1 – 13,16.*[45] This is the only article I have found to date that connects notions of performative force and metalepsis through focussed exegesis.[46] In this as yet un-cited study, Muellner suggests that in Exodus 12 and 13 the permeability of the narrated world intertwines narration and liturgy, and that the text binds remote generations into recognition, repetition and response. She claims that through oral narration, narrative historiography achieves perlocutionary force in the lives of the audience.[47]

> The entanglement or even identification between the acting community of Israel in Exodus and the respective reading and acting community in Israel in the ritual of reading and repetition belongs in the field of metalepsis… Literary traits contribute to the cross-fading of the first Exodus and subsequent feasts, of the acting community and listening community, of the Exodus generation and all following generations.[48]

Muellner argues cogently that the narration "binds subsequent generations into the world of narration" through a wide range of strategies including breach of narrative frames; ambiguous temporal structure; spatial perspective that transcends the location of the narrated action; semantic fields that include connections between active characters and future listeners; discussion of the very act of narration in the form of *mise en abyme* ('placed into abyss' - where an object is represented within itself) and confusion between a singular event and a repeatable action.[49]

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[45] Ilse Muellner, 'Celebration and Narration. Metaleptic features in Ex 12:1 – 13,16', *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from the Late Antiquity Through to Modern Times*, ed. by Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017), pp. 25-38.

[46] Though Richard Briggs explores precisely these themes without reference to metalepsis. His study responds to, and develops Donald Evans' work and explores the commitment of the self that may be required by utterances of performative force in a range of biblical texts. Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 2001).

[47] Muellner, *Celebration and Narration*. p. 37.

[48] Ibid., p. 29-30.

[49] Ibid., p. 33.

Muellner offers a persuasive description of the liturgical lens of Exodus 12 and 13 as 'canonical metalepsis'. She concludes that the performative force of the narrative places inescapable obligations upon its audience:

> Blurring of the boundaries has the effect that respective reader – as long as they accept the text's offer – are more strongly pulled into the world of the narrated than they would be with a simple identificational reading. The Torah as a binding text, as a text that spans across generations is structurally established through narration.[50]

Muellner's assessment could fruitfully be expanded in a number of directions. Paul's narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper, for example, finds life and fulfilment through the recitation and repetition (I Cor. 11:23-26), as do the Christological hymns which Paul repeats in Philippians 2:6-11 and Colossians 1:15-20.[51]

2.3 Summary

The models explored above demonstrate the serious attention that biblical scholars have afforded to the moments of overt extra-diegetic commentary in the text and the language that has been developed regarding breaking-frame, entanglement, asides, obtrusion and intrusion has provided a useful backdrop for more recent studies.[52] Attempts to explain such transgressions as elements of a singular fixed rhetorical purpose undoubtedly oversimplify the range of interventions, transgressions and their effects evident in such anomalies. It is certainly not the case that moments of diegetic contamination are evidence only of "the narrator seeking to remove agency from a knowledgeable reader by foreclosing presumptuous questions."[53] On the contrary, as is shown by a number of studies, narratorial interventions and metaleptic

[50] Ibid., p. 36.
[51] CF. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005) and Ralph P. Martin, 'A Footnote To Pliny's Account of Christian Worship', Vox Evangelica 3 (1964), pp. 51- 57.
[52] For example David M. Rhoads and Joanna Dewey, *Mark as story: An introduction to the narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012).
[53] Paris, *Narrative Obtrusions,* p. 169.

muddles do not necessarily reduce ambiguity. Often they contain the capacity to propel the reader into a profound depth of uncertainty or to invoke reflective response.

The range of studies cited above illustrates the extent to which anomalies in surface structures and thresholds between narrative levels may affect a reader: whether binding her to repetition of a liturgy, identifying herself within a parable, or questioning the role of the narrative voice within the reception of the story. However, the scarcity of studies in biblical metalepsis is also noteworthy: there is a major gap between the significant comments of narrative critics in the 1980s and the more recent genesis of meaningful exploration into the effects of narrative intrusions or metalepses typified by the work of Estes or Muellner. Furthermore textual analysis has not yet yielded sustained theological consideration. Given the profound potency of studies regarding the threshold between representation and reality in film, theatre, art and fiction, meaningful philosophical consideration should be anticipated in explorations of metalepsis in biblical narrative. To an extent there is some catching up to do in fields of biblical hermeneutics and biblical theology. In the close readings that follow in chapters 3 to 6 I hope, in part to address these gaps. First though, in the following sections I offer discussion of realism, figuralism, contemporaneity, transformation, selfhood, mimesis and metaphor. These themes, as developed in the writings of Erich Auerbach, Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Ricoeur, establish a vocabulary and conceptual scaffolding which will shape subsequent development of the hermeneutical and theological implications of biblical metalepsis.

3. Erich Auerbach

Over the past 60 years the work of the German philologist Erich Auerbach has been of sustained significance for students of realism in Western literature. Auerbach examined the 'inner' spiritual mentalities or philosophies that are revealed in the changing trajectories of western literature. As James I Porter has suggested, "in a word, Auerbach's writings effectively chart and then explore the difficult discovery of the sensuous, the earthly, and the human and social worlds."[54] It was Auerbach's suggestion that consideration of language, art and literature ought to be recognised as evidence of the unfolding history of ideas that constitute "the wealth of events" and the "sensuousness of human life."[55] These themes are of particular significance in *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* (1929), *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1953), *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature,* (1959) and the recently published compilation *Time, History, and Literature* (2014).

Auerbach's review of Western literature contains a remarkable range and complexity of philosophy and thought and his work has shaped both the study of comparative literature and appreciation of the Bible as literature. He made bold claims regarding the significance of the Judeo-Christian tradition, asserting that the narrative composition of the biblical text is inextricable from its meaning, and that both form and content oblige the reader to find herself absorbed into the framework of salvation history narrativized in the canon.[56] Whilst a great number of these

[54] James I Porter, *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach with an introduction by James I. Porter Translated by Jane O. Newman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. xiii.
[55] Ibid*.,* p. xv. Seth Lerer questions whether a text can truly be said to represent the period, culture or context in which it was composed. Cf. Seth Lerer (ed.), *Literary history and the challenge of philology: the legacy of Erich Auerbach* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 6.
[56] Cf. Paul Ricoeur in *Figuring the sacred: Religion, narrative, and imagination*, Sacred - Religion, Narrative and Imagination (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1995), p. 183; and George Lindbeck, *The nature of doctrine: Religion and theology in a postliberal age* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1984), p. 135.

themes merit exploration, two particularly stand out for consideration in the present thesis.

Firstly, the most famous of his conclusions is the suggestion that the worldview advanced in scriptural stories is a totalitarian and tyrannical depiction of reality that demands the submission of all other narratives:

> The Bible's claim to truth is not only far more urgent than Homer's, it is tyrannical – it excludes all other claims. The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality – it insists that it is the only real world and it is destined for autocracy. All other scenes issues and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it. And it is promised that all of them, the history of mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, and will be subordinated to it. The scripture world stories do not court our favour, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us. They seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected, we are rebels.[57]

The broader context of Auerbach's argument relates to his understanding of realism, and this is of particular significance in later discussions about the boundaries between realities represented in text, and the world of the reader.

Secondly Auerbach's understanding of the importance of figuralism within Christian hermeneutics has been of sustained importance in subsequent thinking. Indeed, a wealth of discussion regarding the meaningfulness of time and history can be accessed through Auerbach's understanding of figures. Auerbach defines a figure as "something real and historical which announces something else which is real and historical. The relation between two events is revealed by an accord or similarity."[58] Figuralism is thus a prism through which to explore the role of the time and perspective of the biblical narrator within Christian hermeneutics.

[57] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 14-15.
[58] Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 11- 76 (p. 29).

These themes augment consideration of the narrator's role in biblical hermeneutics, and, since Auerbach wrote, have subsequently played a significant role in understanding the history of Western literature and consciousness. The value of close readings of individual texts that he developed, and the complex connections between figures and themes that he found fulfilled and repeated through the diverse literary aesthetics, genres and periods have been of sustained significance.

3.1 Realism

> Abraham, Jacob, or even Moses produce a more concrete, direct, and historical impression than the figures of the Homeric world not because they are better described in terms of sense (the contrary is the case) but because the confused, contradictory multiplicity of events, the psychological and factual cross-purposes, which true history reveals, have not disappeared in the representation but still remain clearly perceptible.[59]

One of the most important of Auerbach's contributions is the contrast that he draws between the concrete, common, dense and ambiguous picture of the world portrayed in realistic literary representation and the stylised, foreground-heavy approach of idealised narrative forms. This contrast is most evident in his essay *Odysseus' Scar*, in which Auerbach introduced the idea of the Elohistic form in contrast to the Homeric. Auerbach's view was that the realism encountered across a range of Western literature treats the actuality of normal life much more honestly than was the case in ancient and classical texts which were stylised, elevated and hierarchically exclusive. He traced the value of realism back to the grounded, inwardly alive, socially mixed and theologically ambiguous view of the world found in the Old Testament. Auerbach frequently returned to this theme, notably in his discussions of Dante, whose work Auerbach was uniquely appreciative of. Auerbach observed in Dante's descriptions a naturalism that no other commentators had noticed. He

[59] Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 20.

suggested that far from being the stylised, ethereal caricatures of the deceased that might be expected, Dante presents his creatures with all the vitality of everyday, actual people who have been shaped by time. According to Auerbach, Dante characters are described in all their "contingent and particular glory…for the souls of Dante's otherworld are not dead… No… they are the living."[60]

Whilst praising representations of earthly, honest human experience (and charting the development of such notions through the history of the western canon) Auerbach criticised the formal or the stylised. A good example of this tension can be found in the way he describes the concrete reality of Latin prose in contrast to the exalted poetry of French dramatists. He eulogises Gregory of Tours's *History of the Franks* as follows:

> Gregory's literary Latin not only is decadent grammatically and syntactically, it is used in his work to an end for which, originally or at least in its heyday, it seemed little suited—that is, to imitate concrete reality.[61]

He goes on to laud the "precision" and the "vigor" that Gregory of Tours exemplifies whilst criticising the gradual debasement of such qualities in Latin rhetoric:

> For the literary Latin, and especially the literary prose of the golden age is an almost excessively organising language, in which the material and sensory side of the facts is rather viewed and ordered from above rather than vividly presented in its materiality and sensoriness… the stuff of reality… though it is mastered, is not exploited in its sensory potentialities.[62]

Auerbach traces this elevated perspective to its zenith in the rigid formalism of French classicists and their 'impoverished, ideological conception of socio-political

[60] Erich Auerbach, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: NYRB, 2007), pp 146-150. Cf. James I. Porter, Earthly (Counter-)Philology', pp. 243-245.
[61] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 89.
[62] Loc. cit.

reality.' He finds in the drama of Racine a remarkable and "extreme exaltation of the tragic personage" and erasure of everyday reality.[63]

> Racine's consistently elevated tone… shuns every type of concrete realism. [Racine] went further than anyone else in isolating the scene and secluding the action from everything low, extrinsic, and accessory… Racine's concept of the natural was identified with a well-developed and well-educated type of human being, decorous in conduct and able to adjust with ease to the most exacting situations of social living… To call something natural was almost tantamount to calling it reasonable and seemly… The classic tragedy of the French [thus] represents the ultimate extreme in the separation of styles, in the severance of the tragic from the everyday and real.[64]

Auerbach analysed the depth of relationship between the reality depicted within a text and that which was experienced by the audience. Indeed, comparison between the literary forms and exploration of the significance of surface aesthetics as modes of exploring reality are hallmarks of Auerbach's work. Auerbach's view, though he never neatly defined it, was that realism was not ultimately located in the accuracy of depiction or the vividness of vocabulary. Rather, it is a method of re-presenting the authenticity of life as it might be experienced by an audience. Realism is the artistic form that faithfully represents the vernacular, the mundane, the every-day and the experience of life shared by ordinary people. This emphasis places Auerbach somewhat at odds with more conventional understandings, such as that expressed by Terry Eagleton.

> A poet who managed to make his or her words 'become' the fruit they describe would be a greengrocer. No representation, one might say, without separation. Words are certainly as real as pineapples, but this is precisely the reason they cannot be pineapples. The most they can do is create what Henry James called the 'air of reality' of pineapples. In this sense, all realist art is a kind of con trick – a fact that is most obvious when the artist includes details that are redundant to the narrative (the precise tint and curve of a moustache,

[63] Ibid., pp. 393-4. Auerbach suggests that Racine describes "neither a Christian drama nor even a human one," but rather "a fierce clash of instinctual forces"—no "Protestant greatness of soul," but a "canniness" and "rashness" of decision making, an "autonomy" of passions, an "instinct for life" and a "violence of desires".
[64] Ibid., p. 376-386.

> let us say) simply to signal: 'This is realism.' In such art, no waistcoat is colourless, no way of walking is without its idiosyncrasy, no visage without its memorable features. Realism is calculated contingency.[65]

Eagleton suggests that realism is a determined attempt to mimic reality. It is a mode of artifice that is characteristic by imitation of the details of life. By contrast Auerbach consistently identified realism in texts which others missed, identifying narratives as realistic narratives if they reproduced the common, concrete, humble, earthly and frail experience of people. He suggested that across the history of western literature, "each oscillation between eras accomplished a greater realism… and a higher degree of truth."[66]

Auerbach's sense was that texts carried the capacity to elevate the potential of human consciousness through reverberating with reality, and he understood realism therefore to be a mode that maximised the correspondence or referentiality between the representation of the past in the text and the reality of the past as it has been interpreted or experienced.[67] Auerbach's understanding of realism is therefore, essentially, a methodological realism: for he asserts a model of realism based upon the process of connecting one discourse with the life of another.[68] Auerbach observed that the measure of a text's realism was not necessarily dependent on the accuracy of the depiction of the exterior world, but rather, on the validity of the figural images of the past that are exhibited in the text. Thus, in Auerbach's work realism should be understood as an aesthetic mode that implicitly demonstrates

[65] Terry Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', *London review of books*, Vol. 25 No. 20, (23 October 2003), pp. 17-19.
[66] Edward W. Said, 'Introduction' in *Mimesis* (op. cit.), p. xiii.
[67] "[in the Bible] Humiliation and elevation go far deeper and far higher than in Homer, and they belong basically together. And how much wider is the pendulum swing of their lives than that of the Homeric heroes. For they are bearers of the divine will, and yet they are fallible, subject to misfortune and humiliation and in the midst of misfortune and in [realism of] their humiliation their acts and words reveal the transcendent majesty of God. " Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 18.
[68] Adi Efal, *Figural Philology: Panofsky and the Science of Things* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), p. 58.

narratological intent toward truthful representation of ideas and experiences. It is first and foremost historicism that has been stripped of artificial description, creative licence and lofty aesthetics. This is because Auerbach considered there to be a deep relationship between realism and truth: indeed realism and truthfulness to the human experience are co-dependent. Auerbach explains:

> The Biblical narrator was obliged to write exactly what his belief in the truth of the tradition (or, from the rationalistic standpoint, his interest in the truth of it) demanded of him-in either case, his freedom in creative or representative imagination was severely limited; his activity was perforce reduced to composing an effective version of the pious tradition. What he produced, then, was not primarily oriented toward "realism" (if he succeeded in being realistic, it was merely a means, not an end); it was oriented toward truth. Woe to the man who did not believe it![69]

Auerbach's notion of the relationship between realism and veracity has had sustained influence and may be illustrated through the writing of Hans Frei and Alister McGrath. Frei charted the gradual subtle changes in biblical hermeneutics that had, over time, hidden the 'profound realism' of biblical narrative.[70] He criticised the manner in which biblical scholars had effected a concealment of the meaningfulness of scriptural narrative as a representation of reality and suggested that this trend had deprived readers of authentic meaning. [71]

Frei's work builds upon Auerbach's analysis of the profound freight of the biblical worldview and is an apology for the Christian reading of scripture, wherein a reader is invited to understand her own world according to the Bible's long and overarching history of fall, redemption and final consummation. Frei contends that

[69] Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 14.
[70] Frei acknowledged the significance of Auerbach's influence upon his own approach (particularly regarding Auerbach's analysis of the "realistic" nature of biblical narrative) and in the preface to *The Ecplise of Biblical Narrative*, he wrote: "The Impact of Auerbach's classic study Mimesis… is evident throughout the essay." Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), p. vii.
[71] Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian theology*, p. 10. cf. Mike Higton, *Christ, Providence and History* (London: A&C Black, 2004) p. 123; Jason A. Springs, *Toward a generous Orthodoxy: prospects for Hans Frei's postliberal theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016) p. 46.

biblical narrative presents: “a coherent world of discourse in its own right, whose depictions and teachings have a reality of their own, though to be sure it is a reality into which all men have to fit.”[72] He asserts that the meaning of biblical narrative is inseparable from the story itself and that, moreover, Jesus’ identity in the Gospels is represented in an “unsubstitutional” sense so that the person of Jesus described, refigured and represented in their narratives may be made ‘present’ to the reader.[73] He was convinced that a theologically self-involved reading of the realistic sense of the text was both the most constructive and the most appropriate hermeneutic possible:

> Through the coincidence and even identity between the world being depicted and its reality being rendered to the reader (always under the form of depiction), the reader or hearer in turn becomes part of that depicted reality and thus has to take a personal life stance toward it.[74]

Auerbach, and Frei after him, offered a vigorous defence of historical realism, and of the value of this realism within the biblical canon. Auerbach’s contention is that the figures presented in the Bible convey historicity and that, by virtue of their visceral connectivity with the ambiguity and tragedy interwoven in human experience, they should also be understood as meaningful representations of other aspects of reality. This figural realism refuses to divorce the divine from the actuality of history. Instead Auerbach suggests that it is through its background-rich depiction of the human condition that the Bible succeeds in both representing reality and rendering it meaningful. It is the biblical depiction of the corporeal (earthly or *irdisch*) that most fully realises the reality of the celestial (inner or *himmlisch*).

[72] Ibid., p. 90
[73] Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ, Expanded and Updated Edition: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2013), p. 127.
[74] Frei, *The Ecplise*, p. 24.

> This mingling of styles is not dictated by an artistic purpose. On the contrary, it was rooted from the beginning in the character of Jewish-Christian literature; it was graphically and harshly dramatized through God's incarnation in a human being of the humblest social station, through his existence on earth amid humble everyday people and conditions, and through his Passion which, judged by earthly standards, was ignominious; and it naturally came to have ... a most decisive bearing upon man's conception of the tragic and the sublime.[75]

For Auerbach the realism of the Gospels "rests upon a contamination of elements: God and man; sovereign and slaves; religious ideas and the humble milieu" and it is the tension between *sublimitas* and *humilitas* that underpins all that Auerbach considers 'realistic representation.[76] Realism then for Auerbach is the paradoxical presence of the meaningful in the commonplace. It is the discovery of the sublime in the visceral, and for Auerbach it is to be found most clearly in the manner in which biblical narratives locate the presence of God in the empty foreground of Mount Moriah, in the inner agony of Peter's denial or the paradox of the crucified Christ:

> The historical core of Christianity… offers a more radical paradox, a wider range of contradiction, than anything known to the ancient world, either in its history or in its mythical tradition… [the incarnation] was to provoke the greatest of all transformations in the inner and outward history of our civilized world.[77]

Despite his influence and sustained significance in theological dialogue, Auerbach's elevated sense of the significance of realism has also received criticism. Frank R. Ankersmit, for example, has suggested that Auerbach's criticism of other literary forms is driven by the fixed definition of realism that Auerbach possessed and "of which he perceived the enterprise of Corneilles and Racine to be a fatal transgression."[78] Auerbach's analysis of narrative mode is indeed political rather than

[75] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 41.
[76] Robert Doran, 'Literary History and the Sublime in Erich Auerbach's Mimesis' *New Literary History 38*, no. 2 (2007), pp. 353-369 (p. 358).
[77] Auerbach, *Dante*, p. 11.
[78] Frank R. Ankersmit, 'Why Realism? Auerbach on the Representation of Reality', *Poetics Today 20,* No. 1 (1999), pp. 53-75 (p. 58).

formal, and intuitive rather than epistemological and is often criticised for approaching realism as a value-term more than a technical, historical or fixed form.[79] Ankersmit identifies five quite separate concepts of realism in Auerbach's writing: "(1) the notion of the mixture of styles, (2) the notion of figura, (3) Auerbach's Hegelianism, (4) the emphasized sublimity of realism, and (5) reality's best presenting itself in experience."[80] He questions whether, "a theoretical reconciliation of [Auerbach's] conflicting conceptions of realism can be achieved." Terry Eagleton similarly notes the methodological weakness implicit in Auerbach's comparison between realistic and aesthetic literary forms (as exemplified in *Odysseus' Scar*).[81]

> Realism is representation in accordance with conventional real-life modes of representing it... We cannot compare an artistic representation with how the world is, since how the world is in itself a matter of representation. We can only compare artistic representations with non-artistic ones, a distinction which can itself be a little shaky.[82]

Eagleton's criticism is shaped by his sense that a realistic representation of reality is impossible. At best, realism is effectively an aesthetically realistic representation of a sense of reality. Eagleton suggests that the limit of realism is found in the blind spot of all representationalism, and his view here is of fundamental significance to later consideration of the self and the narrator's own involvement in biblical narrative:

> If the source of representing is the self, it is doubtful whether the self can be captured within its own view of the world, any more than the eye can be an object in its own field of vision. In picturing the world, the self risks falling outside the frame of its own representations. It is the dynamic power behind the whole process, but one which it is hard to figure there. The human subject becomes the blind spot at the centre of the picture, the absent cause of the world's coming to presence.[83]

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[79] Cf. Terry Eagleton, 'Text, ideology, realism' in *Literature and Society* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp.149-73.
[80] Ankersmit, 'Why Realism?', p. 73.
[81] Eagleton, 'Text, ideology, realism', p. 73.
[82] Terry Eagleton, 'Pork Chops' p.18. Cf. Terry Eagleton, Literary theory: An introduction (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).
[83] Eagleton, 'Pork Chops', p.19.

Although Eagleton's work illustrates how scholars have latterly departed from Auerbach's model of realism and his suggestion of its primacy, Auerbach's appreciation of the significance of the humble and the visceral can still be keenly felt in Eagleton's (and others') work. Whilst Eagleton disagrees with Auerbach over the particular merits of realism, he nevertheless shares Auerbach's sense of significance of this aesthetic mode. This is evident in his description of the heart of biblical realism which reflects precisely the brutality and tragedy that Auerbach considered an essential component of sublime narrative:

> The New Testament is a brutal destroyer of human illusions. If you follow Jesus and don't end up dead, it appears you have some explaining to do. The stark signifier of the human condition is one who spoke up for love and justice and was done to death for his pains. The traumatic truth of human history is a mutilated body.[84]

3.2 Figures

> What Auerbach designates as a 'figure' is not to be confused with an analogy; rather, it is to be thought of as a specific historical entity with the capacity to relate to another entity within or beyond the historical process. As Auerbach observes, 'earthly phenomena are on the whole merely figural, potential, and requiring fulfilment.'… Words, events, individuals – all were to be seen as possessed of a capacity, when appropriately interpreted by the *intellectus spiritualis*, to point to other aspects of a greater reality.[85]

Auerbach's approach to the figural has been a gift to contemporary Christian hermeneutics. Through figuralism Auerbach explores a model of scripture which co-locates the meaning of the Bible with its narrative shape. Auerbach's hermeneutics, "preserves the full historicity of the Scriptures along with the deeper meaning" suggesting that the Bible contains an historical footprint and a metaphorical fullness.[86] In his approach to the figural Auerbach posits a degree of continuity within history so that one event or person may genuinely be a meaningful prefiguration of

[84] Terry Eagleton, *Reason, faith, & revolution: reflections on the God debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 27.
[85] McGrath, *Scientific Theology*, p. 81.
[86] Auerbach, *Scenes,* p. 36.

their historical counterparts. This model underpins Auerbach's understanding of the fundamental contribution of Christian hermeneutics to human society:

> Its integral, firmly teleological, view of history and the providential order of the world gave it the power to capture the imagination and innermost feelings… with its living historicity… [Christian Figural interpretation] was a fresh beginning and a rebirth of man's creative powers.[87]

Auerbach's concept of a 'figure' is therefore fundamental to his hermeneutical enterprise and, since the time of his writing, has been of increasing importance to Christian doctrine. Auerbach's is essentially a simple observation:

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself, but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first.[88]

Viewing history itself as a sequence of figure-fulfilment relationships, Auerbach allows the development of Christian theology which traces providence throughout the 'dimensions of historical happening' without resorting to triumphalism or to poeticized existentialism.[89] The significance of the notion of figural hermeneutics within Christian models of history is necessarily most obvious in approaches to the incarnation. This is particularly evident in Hans Frei's "figural economy of scripture" which locates the centre of the Christian faith in the incarnate Christ, who is simultaneously fulfilment and figure.[90] Frei contends that all 'creaturely reality' is fulfilled in the reconciliation of the divine and the human in Jesus of Nazareth, whose very self fulfils the fundamental role of all creatures as 'witness'. Christ is figure, and fulfilment. He is the one who is still to come in the second advent, and who in his first advent represents the full range of those creatures that long for relationship and

[87] Ibid., p. 56.
[88] Ibid., p. 53.
[89] Hayden White, 'Auerbach's Literary History: Figural Causation and Modernist Historicism' in *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*, ed. by Seth Lerer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 124-39 (p. 91).
[90] Mike Higton, 'The Fulfilment of History in Barth, Frei, Auerbach and Dante' in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. by M. Higton and J.C. McDowell (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004) pp.120-141 (p. 122).

reconciliation. It is not that Adam is like Christ or Christ is like Adam, both are historical expressions of a transcendent theme that neither completely expresses. The one foreshadows and is fulfilled by the other and the two are bound by history rather than imagination. The first figure is never obscured in future interpretation but is rendered more meaningful by the second figure who fulfils the symbols prefigured in the past. For Auerbach it was the symmetry of recursive themes in history that continued to interpret and be interpreted that established the value of a figurative hermeneutics rather than understanding through analogy.

Auerbach's approach to figuralism is a rich vein for biblical hermeneuticists. His concepts allow positive theological assertions regarding a breadth of Christology, appreciation of the value of reception history; recognition of the canonical momentum evident in prophecy and the development of historically conscious interpretation. He opens a doorway into consideration of the narrator as a figure of reception, interpretation and proclamation. His model also forecloses triumphalism for his concept of history itself is founded upon the suggestion that historical events "have something provisional and incomplete about them." He attends consistently to super-chronological themes and figural interpretations that add a depth of sublime meaning to the events of history and, tellingly insists that history itself is inherently figurative:

> Thus history, with all its concrete force, remains forever a figure, cloaked and needful of interpretation. In this light the history of no epoch ever has had the practical self-sufficiency which, from the standpoint both of primitive man and of modern science, resides in the accomplished fact.[91]

Mike Higton has suggested that such a particularly figural reading of history risks replacing "uncontrollable history... with a calculus" and he contends that the search

[91] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 58. See also Lewis Ayres 'Representation, theology and Faith', *Modern Theology* 11, no. 1 (1995), pp. 23-46.

for resolution through figural reading can be reductive.[92] He notes that when exegesis identifies a pattern in a narrative, the pattern is inevitably less rich than the story it describes, and that patterns and figures must remain subordinate to their stories rather than being allowed to replace them. Higton explains that an exclusively figural interpretation of the Old Testament might devalue it and must be avoided:

> Fulfilment of the Old Testament in the New is not its abolition, but rather… a fulfilment that sends us back again and again to read the Old Testament 'in its own terms', paying attention to its complex, contingent, disruptive nature… We may erect abstract doctrinal scaffolding – but we will have to make sure both that the doctrine is framed in such a way as not to suggest that the pattern we have seen is somehow a replacement for the story in which we found it… and that we do not suggest that this pattern is the only one that can be found.[93]

This issue is one already realised in Auerbach's model. He asserted both the historical reality of the Old and the New Testaments and also their providential connectedness. He explained the appropriation and re-application of the Jewish doctrines of sin, redemption and revelation within the Christian canon but he also recognised the inherent devaluation (*Entwertung*) of Judaism that has occurred through Christian figuralism.[94] It was Auerbach's view that the Christian figural interpretation of Old Testament traditions paved the way for the eventual secularisation of Western theology and the beginnings of 'earthly' things being afforded "autonomous value."[95] He saw the significant de-Christianization (*Entchristung*) of Christianity as a rupture in history and suggested that a figural and ethical interpretation would eventually secularise the Christian faith.[96]

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[92] Higton, *The Fulfilment,* p. 27.
[93] Ibid., p. 28. Cf. White, *Figural Realism.*
[94] Cf. Avihu Zakai and David Weinstein, 'Erich Auerbach and His "Figura": An Apology for the Old Testament in an Age of Aryan Philology', *Religions 3*, no. 2 (2012), pp. 320-338.
[95] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. xxv.
[96] Cf. James I. Porter, 'Erich Auerbach's Earthly (Counter-) Philology', *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures 2*, no. 2 (2013), pp. 243-265.

> Secular Dante was realizing a potential within the Christian theological worldview that led to the dissolution of that worldview altogether. In Dante, "the indestructibility of the whole historical and individual man turns against [the divine] order . . . and obscures it. The image of man eclipses the image of God. Dante's work realized the Christian-figural essence of man, and destroyed it in the very process of realizing it.[97]

Auerbach's understanding of the significance of figural interpretation must therefore be understood to develop competing consequences for Christian hermeneutics. On the one hand, he offers new depth and life to discourse and traditions, whilst on the other he notes the threat of assimilation into a secular evolution of Western Philosophy. Auerbach imagined that Christian literature, ethics, models of selfhood and reality would be of sustained significance through their appropriation and figural re-application, even though he envisaged this re-application in a secularised landscape. He suggests that "eschatological anxiety" and "earthly insecurity" are at the heart of the Christian faith and that messianic expectations, and their lack of absolute fulfilment, were fundamental to the advance of an ethical and philosophical richness in European consciousness and literature.[98] The longing for fulfilment and the ache for the sublime have underpinned direction of Western thought. In the incarnation Christianity brought transcendence into the orbit of human existence and 'contaminated' human consciousness "to the point that the worldly and unworldly came to be gradually unified." [99]

Auerbach suggests that enlightened historical contingency is the inevitable destination prefigured by the incarnation, just as the Christian kerygma was a more grounded expression of Jewish figuralism. Christian literature thus contains the genesis of modern individualism and, ironically, the figure of its own undoing and the seeds of modern secularism. Christian dogma and doctrine might therefore by

[97] Auerbach, *Mimesis,* p. 202
[98] Auerbach, *Dante*, pp.12-13.
[99] Doran, *Literary History*, p. 360.

superseded whilst the remarkable paradoxes and figures at the heart of the faith prove to be of continued historical importance. This paradox is explained by James Porter:

> Figural interpretation is thus forever doomed to be self-erasing in its aspirations, because it marks everything that it touches with indelible ink, and above all what it most wishes to efface. The Old Testament was ironically secured, not erased, by the figural reading of it, as was earthly, worldly history itself. It is allegory, not figural interpretation that seeks to eliminate the Old Testament through the work of abstraction and mystification. Figural reading grounds the Old Testament again in historical reality. And so, Auerbach's favouring of figural reading over allegorical interpretation has to be understood in this same light: as an insistence on the historical relevance of the Old Testament, which was being erased at the very moment that he was writing his essay.[100]

Auerbach depicts the rise of realism as a gradual and inevitable emergence and he imagines that the Christian figuralism will itself be figurally interpreted in a more realistic narrative. In figural realism the meaning of Judeo-Christian literature is of sustained significance through its earthly incompleteness, yet the worldview it seeks to sustain may be consumed when ethical, human, and figural meanings outgrow it. In Auerbach's model, the edifice of human understanding replicates and repeats the best of itself. He suggests that history operates "recuperatively, whereby each successive step becomes possible only thanks to what came before it," and that "humanity accumulates lessons from its own historical struggles." He understands "the appearance of Christ as a concrete event, as a central fact of world history" as the 'decisive story' in European hermeneutics and consciousness.[101] And yet he also views the sublime as a staging post on the road towards a secular realism in which the religious figures of the past find their fulfilment. Hayden White has described this model as "figural causation,"

[100] James I Porter, *Time, History, and Literature,* p xliii.
[101] Ibid., p. 16.

> Auerbach's model of figural causation informs the process in which humanity makes itself through its unique capacity to fulfil the multiple figures in which and by which reality is at once represented as an object for contemplation and presented as a prize… worth the human effort to comprehend and control it.[102]

According to Auerbach, the historical trajectory of figures allow them to transcend history and create worldviews suited to their own fulfilment (a process similar to the manner in which moments of metalepsis allow narrative to bleed into the reader's world). There is of course a paradox at the heart of this concept, for Auerbach seems to assert a transcendent view of the history of narrative whilst equally inferring that literary notions of transcendence itself will ultimately be surpassed.

4. Søren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard's view of the self and its significance in regard to biblical interpretation has had a profound effect on modern hermeneutics including through influence and resonance in the work of Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur and Frei.[103] A number of recent studies have offered a renewed focus on the significance of Kierkegaard's existentialist approach to the interpretative process, and cumulatively they make a compelling argument that his views were a precursor for the development of mainstream 20th century hermeneutical theory.[104] Nevertheless there are good reasons why Kierkegaard's impact upon modern hermeneutics has been insufficiently appreciated. He himself offered no wholesale hermeneutic; he rejected the notion of a 'scientific' approach to reading and even those who are sympathetic

[102] White, 'Figural Realism', p. 88.
[103] Jolita Pons goes as far as to suggest that "Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur remain within the hermeneutical circle (although they try to redefine the problems posed by it), while through his biblical hermeneutics, Kierkegaard offers a way to break the circle." Jolita Pons, *Stealing a Gift: Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms and the Bible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), p. 30.
[104] Cf. Paul S. Minear and Paul S. Morimoto, *Kierkegaard and the Bible: An Index* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953).

to his interpretative agenda have concluded that “Kierkegaard is not an exegete, at least not in the modern sense.”[105] Because his approach to hermeneutics is so exclusively scriptural and his approach to scripture fundamentally exhortative, it is understandable that the significance of his underlying attitude has only been attended to in the last decades. [106]

I have chosen to examine Kierkegaard’s views rather than those of the more obviously historically significant hermeneuts in part because his position has not been sufficiently expounded or reiterated. There are also three areas of particular resonance between his writing and this study. Firstly, Kierkegaard suggests that faithful biblical interpretation demands *contemporaneity* with Christ, in a manner that muddles the temporalities of the reader and of the text. Secondly his approach to biblical narrative is overtly theological and is explicitly rooted in his understanding of a Christian faith that places demands on believers. He develops his position through creative exegesis, loose allusion and his own frequent metaleptic transgressions across and between biblical texts and his own writings. Thirdly, Kierkegaard’s work reverberates significantly with the notion that metaleptic contamination within biblical narrative stresses the role of the self in reception. He suggests that the biblical text, when it speaks to Christians as “God’s Word,” demands an onward repetition of the signs within the Gospel; invites imitation of Christ in the life of the reader; solicits the subsummation of the reader’s world through the act of ‘infinite resignation’, and functions as a mirror for the reader’s own self-examination.

[105] Richard Baukham, *James: the wisdom of James, disciple of Jesus* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 61.
[106] John D. Caputo, *How to read Kierkegaard,* (London: Granta Books, 2014).

4.1 Contemporaneity

> A historical Christianity is nonsense and un-Christian muddled thinking because whatever true Christians there are in any generation are contemporary with Christ.[107]

According to Kierkegaard, the "condition of being contemporary with Christ is the defining feature of genuine Christian faith."[108] Contemporaneity is therefore a term that requires singular focus if Kierkegaard's themes of appropriation, imitation and resignation are to be understood. Kierkegaard says:

> Christ is not a comedian, not at all a merely historical person, since, as the Paradox He is an extremely unhistorical person. But this is the difference between poetry and reality: contemporaneousness. The difference between poetry and history is clearly this, that history is what really occurred, whereas poetry is the possible, the imaginary, the poetized. But what really occurred (the past) is not (except in a special sense, i.e., in contrast with poetry) the real. It lack the determinant, which is the determinant of truth (as inwardness) and of all religiousness, the 'for thee.'[109]

Across a range of his works Kierkegaard talks about the pressing immediacy of the "present", the "moment" and the notion of "decision". Highlighting the significance of the interpretative moment, he sought consistently to avoid what we now refer to as the hermeneutical circle.[110] He encourages readers to rejoice in the "shipwreck" of reason and the "crucifixion" of the understanding by holding open the possibility of thinking without entering into the circularity of critical reasoning.[111] For Kierkegaard, the meaning of scripture is a furtive echo of the divine and so, as Patrick Bigelow summarises, "all the reader must do is hold thinking open so that it can be ready for

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[107] *Practice in Christianity IV,* p. 64.
[108] Joshua Cockayne, 'Contemporaneity and communion: Kierkegaard on the personal presence of Christ', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2017), pp. 41-62 (p. 42).
[109] *Training in Christianity IV*, p. 67.
[110] Cf. Alastair Hannay, 'Something on hermeneutics and communication, p. 8.
[111] "It is the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think." Philosophical fragments pp. 46-47. Cf. Patrick Bigelow, 'Kierkegaard and the hermeneutical circle', *Man and World* 15, no. 1 (1982), pp. 67-82.

the appearance of an acoustic illusion."[112] Meaningfulness therefore arrives only and always in the "now" in which the reader who is "ready for thought" but is consumed by a vain "need for discovery", lets the biblical text "come close."[113]

This idea about letting the communication of the Bible 'come close' to the reader is an extension of Kierkegaard's conviction that "the situation of contemporaneousness with Christ is a pre-requisite for Christian faith."[114] His model of Christian hermeneutics is therefore about allowing believers to locate their sense of self within the absoluteness of Christ, rather than the reverse. For Kierkegaard it is a patent absurdity to contextualise Christ or culturally deconstruct the biblical text. In his model the opposite approach is required: the believer is invited to find herself in the narrative and define herself in relation to that which is absolute (Christ).

The driving force in this for Kierkegaard was most certainly his conviction that in relation to the absolute there exists only one tense: the present. He perceived a significant threat to the Gospel in attempts to diminish the offence of the crucified Christ by converting the actual into the metaphorical or the historical, for both keep Christ distant from the reader. Historicism places millennia between readers and the power of Jesus, whilst poetizing the bible renders its power metaphorical. Kierkegaard's approach to the first of these issues is to dismiss the significance of the historical distance of the Gospel:

[112] Ibid, pp. 79-80.
[113] *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard, p. 107.*
[114] Kierkegaard's own term was *samtidighed* which translates literally as 'at the same time as.' For application in Kierkegaard's works see *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990), p. 480; and *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985), p. 69.

> The five, the seven, the fifteen, the eighteen hundred years are neither here nor there; they do not change Him, neither do they in any wise reveal who He was. [115]

Of the poetizing movement Kierkegaard says:

> We are misled and deceived by the trick of poetizing Christ, so that instead of being God He becomes that languishing compassion which men themselves have invented, so that Christianity instead of drawing men to heavenly places is impeded on its way and becomes the merely human.[116]

Kierkegaard seeks to steer between these twin threats through the notion of contemporaneity, as Anthony Rudd surmises: "Kierkegaard obliges the believer to become contemporaneous with Christ and thus, in a sense, abolishes the gap which history necessarily creates."[117] By comparison to other elements of Kierkegaardian hermeneutics, contemporaneity as a theological concept has received significant evaluation and critical responses over the years. C. Stephen Evans for example has examined contemporaneity in some depth in his commentary on Philosophical Fragments, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (1994). He suggests that contemporaneity is an "immediacy of experience" and is the process whereby "a person becomes a disciple, only by a first person encounter with the god in which the god grants the condition of faith."[118] Every disciple of whatever generation is thus a contemporary of Christ in the subjective, but nevertheless real, sense: historical contemporaneity consequently becomes irrelevant.

The consensus position amongst commentators has been to regard contemporaneity as a spiritual or mystical experience. This view has, however, been

[115] *Practice in Christianity*, p. 23.
[116] *Training in Christianity XII*, p. 67.
[117] Anthony Rudd, 'Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and the Wittgensteinian Tradition', in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. by John Lippitt, and George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 484-503 (p. 500).
[118] Stephen Evans, *Philosophical Fragments, Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 77.

challenged by a number of writers including Merold Westphal and Patrick Stokes, both of whom contend that contemporaneity is an epistemic phenomenon. Westphal suggests that, "It would be a mistake to think that when Anti-Climacus speaks of faith as a mode of contemporaneity with Christ he has something mystical in mind. It is rather epistemic contemporaneity of which he speaks."[119]

In Stokes' view (which is considerably more developed than Westphal's), being contemporary with Christ is ultimately the cognitive process inherent within attentive reading, whereby an individual is able to 'see for themselves' the historical traditions about which they read.[120] Stokes contrasts this cognitive view with the more normal approach to contemporaneousness as an experiential moment or religious experience.[121] Stokes' work invites a consideration of the cognitive process by which a reader can know for themselves, but ultimately the dichotomy he presents between an extramundane experience, or a specific type of experience directed towards an extramundane object diminishes the personal urgency evoked in Kierkegaard's writings, as M.G. Piety explains:

> Johannes Climacus asserts in the context of his discussion of "contemporaneousness"… that Christ as "the teacher" "must know [*kjende*] everyone who knows [*kjender*] him, and an individual can know [*kjende*] the teacher only by being known [*kjendt*] by him"… This may make it sound as if contemporaneity, or contemporaneousness, is an epistemic phenomenon. All the terms for "knowledge" in this passage, however, are to acquaintance knowledge, not propositional knowledge; hence, contemporaneousness

[119] Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), p. 257. Cf. Patrick Stokes, *The naked self: Kierkegaard and personal identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 53.
[120] Patrick Stokes, '"See For Your Self": Contemporaneity, Autopsy and Presence in Kierkegaard's Moral-Religious Psychology', *British journal for the history of philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2010), pp. 297-319 (p. 314).
[121] "If we attempt to analyse contemporaneity-with-Christ on a cognitive level, there would seem to be two possible interpretations: one which sees such contemporaneity as possible only with Christ, and one which sees contemporaneity as a cognitive experience." Stokes, '"See for Your Self"', p. 303.

> appears equivalent to a moment of what one could call “mutual recognition” between the individual and God. If that isn’t mystical, I don’t know what is.[122]

M. Jamie Ferreira’s encyclopaedic 2009 work on Kierkegaard focuses the function of contemporaneity as a “performative provocation.”[123] Throughout her consideration of Kierkegaard’s use of scripture Ferreira returns consistently to notions of the invitation and the offence of the Gospel as the concepts through which to best understand Kierkegaard’s notion of contemporaneity. She insightfully extrapolates that Kierkegaard imagined many to be offended by the one who invites, and thus, whilst all might want the offer of comfort, grace and help, many will not “abase themselves with Christ”:

> In *the halt* Kierkegaard develops the notion of the "situation of contemporaneity" with Christ as the hallmark of faith because… "one cannot become a believer except by coming to him in his state of abasement, to him, the sign of offense and the object of faith" It calls on us to examine ourselves.[124]

Ferreira expounds significantly on this view also highlighting that Kierkegaard himself connected contemporaneity with the invitation to imitation, and imitation with the necessity of suffering:

> In the end, the "situation of contemporaneity" posits a direct connection between [the humiliating] offense [experienced by Christ] and imitation: "to be an imitator means that your life has as much similarity to his as is possible for a human life to have."[125]

Ferreira returns frequently to the significance of contemporaneity, and suggests that it is *the* requirement for becoming a Christian, it demands a degree of abasement, it invites a willingness to “suffer with him” and is the only positive outcome from encounter with *the paradox*:

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[122] M. G Piety, ‘The Stillness of History: Kierkegaard and German Mysticism’, *Konturen* 7 (2015), pp. 42–63 (p. 62).
[123] M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 2.
[124] Ibid., p. 176.
[125] Ibid., p. 106.

> To be contemporaneous with Christ means to be present to him in such a way that one risks insult and persecution from others and so even in the invitation it is easy to see why one would prefer to say "No thanks, I would still rather go on being deaf and blind etc. than be helped this way… To hear the invitation of faith you have to be facing Christ "as he existed" indeed, in the only way he has ever existed.[126]

The significance of contemporaneity should thus be understood as a 'multi-dimensional' transitional choice "in which imagination is a constitutive element", and in which "leap", "decision" and "offence" shape contemporaneity as both an experiential and a cognitive process.[127]

One voice of unmitigated criticism regarding Kierkegaard's theology of contemporaneity was that of Paul Tillich. His views have remained significant during the fifty years since he argued that Kierkegaard's approach to contemporaneity was an oversimplification.

> Kierkegaard wanted to solve the problem of historical criticism by this concept of contemporaneity. You can do this if you take contemporaneity in the Pauline sense of the divine Spirit present to us, and showing the face of Jesus as the Christ. But you cannot escape historical criticism by becoming contemporaneous with Jesus himself… For if you already know in which direction to jump, in the direction of Christ, for example, then you must have a reason for this. This reason may be some experience with him, some historical knowledge, some image of him from church tradition, etc., but in any case, you have some content…This is a problem which we have to say Kierkegaard left completely unsolved… His statement that you have to leap over two thousand years to the year A.D. 30 is simply unrealistic, because nobody can do that. The intellectual leap, or emotional-intellectual leap, which you are supposed to make with your whole self, is conditioned by two thousand years of church and cultural history... It is an illusion to think we can become contemporary with Christ insofar as the historical Jesus is the Christ.[128]

There is obvious value in Tillich's criticism: if Kierkegaard were soliciting a leap of faith and a contemporaneity without context or background, his approach would be

[126] *Practical Christianity* 38, p. 12.
[127] Ibid., p. 173. To split the two is a false dichotomy. Cognitive processes are grounded in experience and experience is only meaningful when matched by a degree of cognition.
[128] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought, from its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 471.

as naïve as those who claim to read the Bible free from ecclesiastical tradition. Nevertheless, my analysis of metalepsis suggests that a believer's paradoxical leap toward contemporaneity with Christ is in a sense analogous to the paradoxical movements across spatial-temporal thresholds that are contained within biblical frame-breaking. The biblical text demonstrates a willingness to muddle distinct diegetic worlds and models a concertinaed view of history in which chronology is subservient to meaning. Kierkegaard seems to ask the same of the reader, and if models within biblical narrative are allowed to serve as the context for Kierkegaard's 'leap' then Tillich's criticism may be negated, for the interpreting reader is, in her leap, repeating the leap made by the narrator. Sylvia Walsh explains:

> In his journals Kierkegaard states that 'before there can even be any question about having faith, there must be the situation. And this situation must be brought about by an existential step on the part of the individual... "The requirement is that you must venture out, out into water 70,000 fathoms deep. This is the situation"… It is occasioned by an encounter of the understanding with the absolute paradox, which came into existence in a decisive moment of time, thereby providing a historical point of departure for the eternal happiness of both contemporary and later followers of Christ. The immediate contemporary and the follower 'at second hand' thus stand essentially in the same situation of contemporaneity with this 'absolute fact'.[129]

If genuine contemporaneity is determined by faith, rather than by immediate historical contemporaneity, and faith itself comes from God then the faithful reader of scripture may find herself in the same position as those who have seen God 'face to face.' Biblical narrative contains a cumulative canon of faith whilst also being shaped by cultural history: similarly the individual believer's encounter with the absolute paradox is "conditioned by two thousand years of church and cultural history."[130] The shaping and conditioning of the reader who arrives at faith is therefore no different from the enculturation of the narrator, and thus, if there is any validity in the

[129] Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard: thinking Christianly in an existential mode* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 155
[130] Tillich, *A history of Christian thought*, p. 470.

narrator's self-involved declaration of faith then the self-involved interpretation of the reader is also legitimated. Both know contemporaneity, not through their human consciousness or position in time, but through their relation and encounter with the eternal in time.

The idea of contemporaneity is complicated and Tillich is right that the leap of faith invited by Kierkegaard isn't devoid of contextual or cultural baggage. However, if Kierkegaard is understood to be challenging rather than ignoring historical criticism, reception history and theological tradition, then as Tillich himself acknowledged, Kierkegaard "becomes the prophetic voice" that speaks against obfuscation, passionless interpretation and complacent hermeneutics, and recentralises religion on the paradox, rather than "inadequate but well formulated systems."[131]

> "Out with history," Kierkegaard declares. "In with the situation of contemporaneity."[132]

4.2 Transformative Interpretations

> The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My God, you will say, if I do that my whole life will be ruined. How would I ever get on in the world? Herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the Church's prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh, priceless scholarship, what would we do without you?

[131] Ibid., p. 474.

[132] Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard (*Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), p. 134. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, 69:9. One novel approach to Kierkegaard's notion of contemporaneity is Joshua Cockayne's recent examination of Kierkegaard's attitude to communion: "Kierkegaard thinks of Christ as a living person … engaged through conversation [rather] than through an imaginative engagement with a historical figure." Joshua Cockayne, 'Contemporaneity and communion', (p. 50).

> Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament.[133]

Kierkegaard often criticised the "mismatch between what is written and what is read, between utterance and reception" that he observed in higher criticism and 'superficial' aesthetic interpretations.[134] He was also cynical about Danish orthodoxy, Hegelian speculation, Lessing's deism and Kantian epistemology for the same reasons.[135] His high regard for 'what the Bible actually says' was simultaneously a reaction against the vapid readings of his day and a personal quest for refreshed understanding of the biblical text. Kierkegaard was persuaded of the profoundly powerful transformative potential of the Bible, and the relevance, urgency and immediacy of the text is evident in the creative method with which he responded to biblical narratives and in a number of repeated themes including 'repetition', 'imitation', 'resignation' and the notion of the biblical text as a mirror.

Kierkegaard's remarkably creative approach to interpreting scripture was a significant component of the 'making present' he endeavoured to achieve. The 'rewriting' of biblical narratives with imaginative consideration of other possible outcomes and his pseudonymous engagement with texts are both aspects of this. The most obvious examples of creative exegesis this are found in Kierkegaard's consideration of Abraham on Mount Moriah and Peter in the courtyard where Kierkegaard tests how the story might have developed if the characters had taken different paths. Iben Damgaard has suggested that this approach was part of Kierkegaard's desire to break the frame around the biblical narrative through recasting stories less comfortably for his contemporaries. She asserts that

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[133] *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, p. 105.
[134] Pyper, *The Joy of Kierkegaard*, p. 126.
[135] Cf. L. Joseph Rosas, *Scripture in the Thought of Søren Kierkegaard* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman), p. 57.

Kierkegaard sought to deconstruct Christendom's familiarity with biblical texts for this had reduced them to "harmless pieces of cultural heritage."[136] This is certainly the case in the extended creative interpretation of Genesis 22 in *Fear and Trembling* typified by the following imaginative re-casting of Abraham's actions:

> [Abraham] would have cried out to God, "Reject not this sacrifice; it is not the best that I have, I know that very well, for what is an old man compared to the child of promise, but it is the best that I can give you." He would have thrust the knife into his own breast.[137]

It is surely that case that in his scriptural appropriations Kierkegaard sought to question the reader and let their lives be interrogated by the text.[138] Kierkegaard metaphorically makes strange that which was familiar: "in order to help the reader to discover it anew. [This] produces an alienating distanciation (*Verfremdung*)."[139] Jolita Pons has noted the same distanciation in Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms which are intended to produce disquiet and which sometimes deliberately confuse and confound, as though asking "what is an author anyway?" Pons suggests, "Søren Kierkegaard was one of his own pseudonyms. Or perhaps all of them are God's pseudonyms."[140] Her conclusion is that Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms and his fluid approach to biblical references combine together so that, "quotation and repetition and gift meet in the moment thus enabling appropriation through contemporaneity."[141] She concludes:

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[136] Iben Damgaard, 'Kierkegaard's Rewriting of Biblical Narratives', in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 1: The Old Testament*, ed. by Lee C.Barrett and Jon Bartley Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 207-230 (p. 207).
[137] *Fear and Trembling IV*, 117 p. 20.
[138] Ibid., p. 212.
[139] Damgaard, *Kierkegaard's Rewriting*, p. 216 Damgaard's analysis is insightful and significant for my own study. Other scholars have found connections between Brecht's dramaturgy and Kierkegaard's endeavours to make scripture less comfortable, cf. Rainer Nägele, 'Trembling Contours: Kierkegaard—Benjamin—Brecht', in *Walter Benjamin and History*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 102-17 and Beverly Chan, *Secrets to Tell and Secrets to Keep: Kierkegaard and Brecht on the idea of concealment* (Boston: Boston University Press, 2009).
[140] Pons, *Stealing a Gift*, p. 34.
[141] Ibid., p. 62.

> Kierkegaard's writing never ceases to inscribe the Bible within itself. Kierkegaard's texts speak to us about imitation of the Bible, reduplication, and becoming contemporary to God's word – and they also embody this requirement. He never denies the need for thinking and reflection – indeed, he thinks that the task of contemporaneity can only be achieved by uniting imagination, thinking, and feeling in existing. Kierkegaard gives his reader a gift of God's Word in the most discrete way.[142]

Kierkegaard's creativity demonstrates that he should be understood as more than an antagonistic philosopher or champion of the contrary. He certainly rejected the assumption that knowledge is superior to faith, but he did so because he was not satisfied with the notion that reconciliation toward the objective historicity of truth was the goal of the Christian faith.[143] For Kierkegaard, higher criticism and the Hegelian obsession with historicity and objectivity were ideas that stood in the way of the paradoxical repetition invited by the Bible, whereby readers, through a necessarily subjective and active interpretative process, appropriate the life of Christ in their own lives. Kierkegaard, through creative interpretation and emphasis upon repetition and imitation sought to develop transformative interpretations that might "break the circle of hermeneutics through the moment of decision." [144]

The idea of "repetition" was one aspect of the transformative 'moment of decision' that Kierkegaard encouraged. It is explained most simplistically when Kierkegaard (speaking pseudonymously as Johannes Climacus) says, "Forward he must, backward he cannot go."[145] By this Kierkegaard means that the human can become themselves authentically only through the forward momentum in which the self becomes concrete, appropriates the faith of the figures in biblical narrative and

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[142] Pons, *Stealing a Gift,* p. 146-148. Pons' writing is also useful for the connections she draws between Kierkegaard and subsequent theologians, philosophers and hermeneutists, for example she claims that Ricoeur's hermeneutics have been "enriched without adequate acknowledgment of the influence of Kierkegaard" (p. 30-31).
[143] Stephen Michelman, *The A to Z of Existentialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), p. 203.
[144] Pons, *Stealing a Gift*, p.30.
[145] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 187

reduplicates in their own moment the truth of God's relatedness to his creatures. Repetition is grounded in the forward-moving typological inter-textuality of the Bible, the formation of the self in God's image and the disavowal of attempts to repeat the past. Rebecca Skaggs suggests that Kierkegaard's notion of 'repetition' is actually a new category of existence: it is the transition from possibility to actuality and is the development of the enlightened self.

> Repetition involves a movement forward in existence, and, as such, it enlightens Kierkegaard's interpretation of scripture: readers should allow themselves to be challenged by the text as they read it before God. From this angle, it is not important who wrote the biblical text or our own exegetical, historical, or cultural conclusions. The main thing is the appropriation of the text, allowing the reader to move forward.[146]

Here then is Kierkegaard's first hermeneutical priority: seeing oneself in relation to the text. For Kierkegaard the purpose of hermeneutics was the transformation of the self through subjective appropriation. He asks, "Is my life an expression of the truth?" and says, "One must do what the Word says."[147]

Obedience to the Word is particularly well developed in Kierkegaard's concept of the imitation of Christ. Kierkegaard was insistent "the demonstration of Christianity really lies in imitation," and that "certitude… does not precede but follows, is in and with the imitation of Christ.'[148]

> The imitation of Christ, is really the point from which the human race shrinks. The main difficulty lies here; here is where it is decided whether or not one is willing to accept Christianity…If it is abolished completely (so Christianity becomes, existentially, as easy as mythology and poetry and imitation an exaggeration, a ludicrous exaggeration), then Christianity spreads to such a degree that Christendom and the world are almost indistinguishable, or all

[146] Rebecca Skaggs, 'Kierkegaard's Hermeneutic', *The Heythrop Jour*nal 54, no. 2 (2013), pp. 817-826 (p. 825).
[147] *For Self-Examination XII,* 25. A full discussion is found in Brian Gregor, 'The Text as Mirror: Kierkegaard and Hadot on Transformative Reading', *History of Philosophy Quarterly 28*, no. 1 (2011), pp. 65-84.
[148] 'Judge for Yourselves!' p. 190-1.Cf. Bradley R. Dewey, *The New Obedience: Kierkegaard on Imitating Christ* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968).

> become Christians; Christianity has completely conquered – that is, it is abolished![149]

The 'Imitation of Christ' is therefore to be understood as the authentic reduplication of the image of Christ, who "constitutes… what it means to be human." The process of imitation depends on the individual understanding that Christ, the prototype, represents the ideal that no Christian can fulfil, but who can teach the primacy of faith, the need for grace, and a sense of one's own impotence before God. Joel D.S. Rasmussen has suggested that for Kierkegaard any hermeneutical model that inhibited imitation, limited application, or diminished the immediate impact of the text upon the reader would have been an anathema:

> His priority therefore, seems to be that of ascertaining the different ways a past can become reconfigured as a present reality for an interpreter.[150]

Evidently it was fundamental to Kierkegaard's hermeneutic that the biblical text should be allowed to challenge the reader to position her own reality inside the scope of the biblical text in a way that would transform her situation. Kierkegaard's writings "stir the waters of language" and use the "ambiguity and dialectical elasticity" of biblical quotations to encourage self-involved hermeneutics.[151] Indeed almost every commentary on Kierkegaard notes above all else his quest for a fullness of faith and for biblical interpretation that confronts the reader.[152] Kierkegaard's intimation was that only the one who has experienced "inward deepening" (*Inderliggjorelse*) through délaissement, abandonment or resignation can truly approach the biblical text and find in it sacred history, or God's Word. Approaching

[149] 'Judge for Yourselves!' p. 406

[150] Joel Rasmussen, 'Kierkegaard's Biblical Hermeneutics: Imitation, Imaginative Freedom, and Paradoxical Fixation', in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2: The New Testament,* ed. by Lee C. Barrett and Jon Bartley Stewart, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), pp. 249-84 (p. 261).

[151] Ibid., pp. 146, 120 and 70.

[152] Cf. Edward F. Mooney, *Knights of faith and resignation: reading Kierkegaard's Fear and trembling* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Roy Martinez, 'Kierkegaard's Ideal of Inward Deepening', *Philosophy Today* 32, no. 2 (1988), pp. 110-117; Joel Rasmussen, 'The Transformation of Metaphysics', *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, J. Wolfe and J. Zachhuber, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 11-35.

the Bible any other way merely produces an incarnation-less history.[153] Kierkegaard contrasts those who try to hold on to historicism and imagine themselves to possess rational faith with those rare true 'knights' who fully resign themselves to the divine. Kierkegaard imagines meeting such a man:

> Here he is. Acquaintance made, I am introduced to him. The moment I set eyes on him I instantly push him from me, I myself leap backwards, I clasp my hands and say half aloud, "Good Lord, is this the man? Is it really he? Why, he looks like a tax-collector!"[154]

At the heart of Kierkegaard's hermeneutical project then, self-resignation, subjectivity and personal appropriation of the text are fused.[155] These themes all emerge not only in the language of repetition, imitation and resignation but also in Kierkegaard's insistence that the Word should be understood as a mirror.

> God's Word is the mirror—by reading or hearing it I am to see myself in the mirror.[156]

Patrick Stokes has explained that for Kierkegaard there are important phenomenological reasons for the repeated use of this metaphor. He contends helpfully that the immediate self-recognition involved in seeing oneself in a mirror and the evaluative experience that this immediacy evokes conjure precisely what Kierkegaard anticipates in his biblical interpretation.[157]

> The first requirement is that you must not look at the mirror, observe the mirror, but must see yourself in the mirror. This seems so obvious that one might think it would scarcely need to be said.[158]

Damgaard suggests that Kierkegaard employs the Bible as a mirror "in which we see ourselves truly, since it reveals our self-deception."[159] She builds upon Kierkegaard's

[153] Rasmussen, *Kierkegaard's Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 269
[154] *Fear and Trembling III, 89*, p. 96.
[155] Cf., Pons, *Stealing a Gift* p. 148.
[156] *For Self-Examination XII*, 317
[157] Patrick Stokes, 'Kierkegaard's mirrors: the immediacy of moral vision', *Inquiry* 50, no. 1 (2007), pp. 70-94.
[158] *For Self-Examination XII*, 25

own application of the story of Jacob's struggle with God, noting that for Kierkegaard this dramatic enactment of the meeting between the reader and the biblical commandment is a struggle in which the reader is transformed through the discovery of his own illusory sense of himself.[160] Kierkegaard considered any movement within scholarship that obfuscates the text's purpose as a mirror of the self to be "craftiness," contrived because "we really do not want to see ourselves in that mirror and therefore we have concocted [thirty thousand different ways of reading]… to make the mirror impossible."[161]

Kierkegaard insisted that faithful Christian hermeneutics were fundamentally rooted in an invitation to reconsider the nature of the self in the light of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Interestingly, in his own endeavours to achieve this goal, Kierkegaard's writing itself becomes a study in metalepsis. He consistently muddled the thresholds between hypo-diegetic biblical stories and his own commentary, he blended imaginative reconstructions located in his own time and interpretations of actual biblical narratives and he wrote pseudonymously to create distanciation and facilitate appropriation. Kierkegaard's endeavours to challenge the subjective situation of his own readers result in consistent transgressions of the threshold of the biblical text within his writings and reveal the integral value of metalepsis to transformative hermeneutics.

[159] Damgaard, *Kierkegaard's Rewriting,* p. 207.
[160] Ibid, p. 208.
[161] *For Self-Examination XII,* 25-26.

5. Paul Ricoeur

> Everyone needs a story to live by in order to make sense of the pastiche of one's life. Without a narrative a person's life is merely a random sequence of unrelated events: birth and death are inscrutable, temporality is a terror and a burden, and suffering and loss remains mute and unintelligible.[162]

In the midst of Paul Ricoeur's extensive philosophical exploration of narrative, human identity, reality and meaning there are three monumental and interlocking concepts that are axiomatic to the theological conclusion of this study. In his seminal study *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985 and 1988), Ricoeur explores the complex relationship between time and narrative and develops a threefold model of the human experience of time. He suggests that within human consciousness and descriptions of time there are three inter-related and imaginary acts. He calls these stages, $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$ and $mimesis_3$ and he suggest that narrative allows individuals to make sense of past experiences ($mimesis_{1)}$ and the imagined future ($mimesis_3$) through the prism of the present ($mimesis_2$). This model represents a useful backdrop to my own consideration of the paradox of narrative temporality and the significance of metalepsis as a trope that short-circuits the divide between past, present and future.

A second, and no less important theme is examined in 'Narrative Identity' (1991) and *Oneself as Another* (1992), in which Ricoeur develops a model of the narrative constitution of the self. This model is of particular significance to my understanding of the relationship between the disclosure of the narrating self within metaleptic texts, and a reader's sense of their own selfhood, and is of sustained influence to the theological anthropology I develop in Chapter seven (below). Ricoeur suggests that as humans convert chronology into story (a process he calls

[162] Ricoeur, *Figuring the* Sacred, p. 11.

'emplotment') we intuitively pull together ("*prendre ensemble"*) threads of meaning from the narratives we inherit. Motives, presumptions, preconceptions and prejudices are framed and shaped by the moments we weave into stories in order to make sense of our lives. Story-telling is therefore fundamental to the constitution of the self. Necessarily this theme resonates profoundly within the questions I explore about the boundaries of biblical narrative and their capacity to shape the reality of the reader.

A third concept that is particularly resonant for this study is Ricoeur's notion of metaphor. This is of less immediate consequence for biblical theology than Ricoeur's writings on time and selfhood, but has been of sustained philosophical significance particularly in postmodern conversations about ethics, epistemology and language. Ricouer's suggestion is that metaphor and symbol act as the primary interpreters of reality. His famous aphorism suggests that "the symbol gives rise to the thought."[163] I view Ricoeur's analysis of the nature of metaphor as a parallel enquiry to considerations of metalepsis in this thesis, for much of what Ricoeur suggests about metaphor could equally be said about metalepsis. For example, Ricoeur states "the metaphorical process transposes meaning from fiction to reality", and he asks, "What does the metaphorical statement say about reality... It carries us across the threshold from the sense towards the reference of discourse."[164] These sentiments could equally apply to metalpesis and to the intrusion of the narrator into the diegetic framework of the biblical text, for each also moves the reader across a threshold into a new consideration of their own reality.

[163] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 357.
[164] Paul Ricoeur, *Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Hermeneutics,* ed. by John Dominic Crossan (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), p. 34 and *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 255

5.1 Mimesis

The notion of mimesis is integral to Ricoeur's understanding of time and of selfhood, for he understands mimesis as a bridge between time and the story-telling process in which the self discovers meaning. Ricoeur sees narrative itself as the prism through which individuals can interrogate, examine and understand the past and imagine the future. As Donald Polkinghorne summarises, "For Ricoeur, Narrative is the discourse structure in which human action receives its form and through which it is meaningful."[165] Narrative represents the world of human action and is the structure through which events are meaningfully gathered together. Ricoeur's model builds upon both Aristotle's sense that narrative is "the imitation of action", and also Augustine's model of time which was divided into three parts: the past-present (memory), the attentive present (present) and the expected-present (future).[166] Ricoeur's model fuses elements of both and establishes three stages of interpretation through which to understand time.

Ricoeur's three stages develop a model in which "our present actions are made meaningful by interpreting them in terms of a recollected past and a projected future."[167] These three stages Ricoeur defines as $Mimesis_1$, $Mimesis_2$ and $Mimesis_3$. $Mimesis_1$ is the prefigured life: the goals motives, presumptions, preconceptions that frame an individual's way of being in and conceiving of the world. "$Mimesis_1$ is the world of everyday action already characterized by a meaningful conceptual network that makes narrative possible."[168] It is the landscape of time we inherit and are shaped by and the conceptual networks that have been forged within the mind.

[165] Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 135.
[166] Aristotle's view is developed in *Poetics (I-III)*, and Augustine's in *Confessions XX*.26.
[167] Richard Kearney, 'Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic Imagination', *Philosophy and Social Criticism 14* (1998), pp. 115-145 (p. 131).
[168] Ellen A. Herda, *Research conversations and narrative: A critical hermeneutic orientation in Participation Theory* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishers, 1999), p. 76.

$Mimesis_2$, the present present, is a mediating function where individual events and actions from $Mimesis_1$ are woven into the individuals' world-view. This process of 'emplotment' allows new understandings of time and experience to develop, but this stage requires both a degree of reflection and also a sense of distance from preunderstandings and perspectives shaped through $Mimesis_1$. $Mimises_3$ is the refigured world where the hypothetical and the actual collide.[169] This future present allows the individual to appropriate the 'now' and the 'then' of their own past, imagine possibilities for the future and realise new ways of being. $Mimesis_3$ opens up new actions in real life. It is "the hermeneutic imagination that liberates the reader into a free space of possibility."[170]

In this threefold model Ricoeur brings into focus the inextricable connection between temporalisation and narrative. Temporality characterises mimesis, and mimesis explains temporality. Through the process of emplotment in $Mimesis_2$ the discordances that are felt in an individual's life between remembered, experienced and imagined time are brought into a cohesive story. This process expresses the essential tensions between the creature operated on by time, and the narrative interpretation that seeks to extract coherence from time. Interpretation therefore necessarily defies the linearity of experienced time. It is the process that reconciles the differences between time as it is experienced, as it is imagined and as it is remembered or re-told. Interpretation can only ever be located between prefigured and refigured understandings of human temporality. Interpretations reinforce, reference or reject the meaning and significance suggested by prior narratives and actions and they make sense of the human experience of time. Through the human experience of time and the process of interpretation narratives accumulate

[169] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, p. 5.
[170] Kearney, Hermeneutic Imagination, p. 149.

prodigious combinations of potential meanings which loop or repeat actions in time and foreclose, shape or distort their significance. Narrative discourse should therefore be understood, according to Ricoeur's model, as a self-referencing spiral, which moves inherited and prior pre-understandings through language and discourse toward a distanciated self-awareness and to new understandings of the world. The more adequately narratives reference and make sense of the actions and choices of individuals, the more they become meaningful and gather momentum through time. As Ricoeur says,

> [Narrative] is the attempt to 'grasp together' successive events. The art of narrating, as well as the corresponding art of interpretation, therefore requires that we are able to extract a configuration from a succession of moments... through this… the worlds of... authors and texts open up.[171]

Ricoeur's analysis of the comprehensive interplay between the human experience of time and human expression in narrative is one of his most fundamental contributions to hermeneutical theory. His insistence is that meaning always develops in the mediating function of $Mimesis_2$, in the dialectical relationship between critical awareness and belonging. He suggests that "writing is the consecration of the distanciation between the text and the author" and that reading and interpretation are the actualization of new worlds of possibility which are achieved in the movement between perception and imagination.[172]

> The distanciation of meaning and event is virtual in all discourse… in a sense we belong to historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually). In this respect, mediation by the text is… genuinely creative. The text is, par excellence, the basis for communication in and through distance.[173]

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[171] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. by John Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 278-79.
[172] Ricoeur, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 131.
[173] Ibid., p. 67.

In the reading event Ricoeur locates a meeting between the interpreter's inner world and the particular world of each text to allow the creation of a new picture or understanding in the consciousness of the interpreter. He posits therefore that the object of hermeneutics can never be the text itself, because the text is part of $Mimesis_1$, and is prefigured in the past. The text interpreted in the present is therefore always the text as "discourse."[174] Because this conversation can only ever be developed in the present, the calcification of narrative in the structure of a text will never obscure the fundamental purpose of the discourse, which is, "someone saying something to someone about something."[175] Ricoeur calls the discourse between the world of the text and the world of the reader's present "configuration" and he contends that when a narrative text intrudes into a reader's consciousness in this way texts "project a world of meaning" that beckons readers "to enter, engage, and be transformed by the encounter."[176]

In $mimesis_2$ readers bring meaning out of the fragmentary landscape of $mimesis_1$ and Ricoeur suggests that this process requires both a sense of distance from that which is remembered and a willingness to appropriate the events that are described or recollected. Crucially, Ricoeur reveals that distanciation is never the opposite of appropriation because both are reflexive movements that happen in the attentive present of the reader's now, and both are aspects of the inescapable temporality of the reader.

Moments within narrative that demonstrate narratological self-involvement and metaleptic muddles between diegetic layers illustrate the discursive nature of the

[174] Loc. cit.
[175] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, p. 138.
[176] Cf. Mary Doak, *Reclaiming narrative for public theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004) p. 102.

text for they point towards the existence of an interior hermeneutic within the text in which the narrator engages in the process of emplotment, distanciating herself from, locating herself in relation to and appropriating the meaning of prior events. Biblical metalepsis is an overt demonstration of the struggle in the interior of texts between self-transcending imagination and the limits of fragmented experience, between the movement towards distanciation through historiography and the movement towards appropriation through testimony. Within biblical narrative, in moments such as metaleptic transgressions, narrative asides or the disclosure of the self-involvement of the narrator, an inner biblical hermeneutic is offered which matches the "tension between distanciation and appropriation" in the exterior hermeneutic arc.[177] The same tension that Ricoeur describes in the life of the reader is also pregnant within the text. Thus I suggest that in odd moments when biblical narratives confess unexpected subjectivity or transgress the rational boundary structures, the text reveals the unavoidable tension in the interior life of the text. Narrative discourse may be the consecration of distance between author and meaning, but it is also the foundation for readerly appropriation.

5.2 Others, Narrative and the Self

There are two interlocking aspects of Paul Ricoeur's understanding of selfhood that are fundamental to later considerations in this thesis. These are firstly, the relationship that he establishes between selfhood as otherness, and secondly, the concept that he develops regarding identity as a form of narrative.

According to Ricoeur, self-understanding develops only in our relationships with others, because awareness of the difference between the self and the other is

[177] Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur,* ed. by Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1995) p. 165.

axiomatic to any constitution of selfhood. Ricoeur begins his exploration in *Oneself as Another* by examining the language of embodied selfhood, and moves from here to note that, as each human has a body through which experience of the world is mediated, there are a range of sensations that each experience and that each also naturally attributes to other persons who have bodies.[178] However, Ricoeur reveals that because the others who have bodies are distinct from the self, every individual ought to be aware of the profound uncertainty about the sensations actually experienced by others.[179] It is therefore impossible for an individual to know if the experience they ascribe to themselves and that they also attribute to others, is actually similar.

From this epistemological dilemma Ricoeur develops a model of otherness, and from the distinction he draws between the self and the other, he goes on to establish that self-awareness comes only through one's relation to the life that is shared with and among others in the world. Ricoeur resists any philosophy which suggests that selfhood may be discovered through interior journeys, for he claims that to speak of "the self" must always suggest a relationship of distinction between this same-self and the other. It is the non-similarity and the divergence between the self and the other that demarcates the boundary of the self. A sense of selfhood is thus defined by the complicated interplay between distinction from, and similarity to, others.

> We have to acquire simultaneously the idea of reflexivity and the idea of otherness, in order to [develop] a strong sense of that which correlates and belongs to the self… and [that which constitutes] and belongs to another.[180]

[178] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 38.
[179] Loc. cit.
[180] Ibid., p. 39.

The others in reference to whom the self is defined are therefore fundamental to the sense of selfhood that an individual may develop. This is a notion that was already expressed by Kierkegaard:

> A kind of otherness that is not the result of comparison… can be constitutive of selfhood…The selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other.[181]

In awareness of alterity and non-similarity a human being then is both a self which relates to itself and also, in its distinctiveness, a being that is "established by another."[182] The self is an ontological category depended on that which is beyond itself. It is not that selfhood is a foundation, and otherness is an additional category, rather otherness is a constituent component of selfhood.

> Otherness is not added on to selfhood from outside, as though to prevent [selfhood's] solipsistic drift… it belongs instead to the tenor of meaning and to the ontological constitution of selfhood.[183]

The significance of this approach in my thesis is that it helps to explain how the narrating persona finds themselves constituted in relation to the divine Other and, furthermore, it supports the model of selfhood I perceive in the life of the reader who is called to define herself in reference to the biblical world-view and its characters, rather than augmenting her reality through these figures. The selfhood demonstrated by biblical narrators and invited in their readers is one in which the Other, and the stories of other others, constitute and defines the self.

The second significant theme developed in Ricoeur's model of selfhood is his claim that identity (which he splits into two forms, *ipse* and *idem*) is itself a narrative construct.

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[181] Loc. cit.
[182] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death,* p. 29.
[183] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 317.

> It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves, it makes little difference whether these stories are true or false, [for] fiction as well as verifiable history provides us with an identity.[184]

Ricoeur suggests that an individual's sense of self is conceptually constituted: there is no intrinsic, deep down, esoteric 'thing' that is itself the essence of selfhood or the determinant of our sense of self.[185] Our sense of self is found in the stories about ourselves that we remember and repeat. An individual's selfhood is therefore defined by the episodes they allow to form a story which, when strung together in sequence (emplotment), create an impression of a persisting character that is separable from all the others within this narrative. Ricoeur suggests:

> Self identity… is a discordant concordance…a situation where we can bring ourselves together narratively only by superimposing in some way a configuration with a beginning, a middle, and an ending. But in the same way we are always in the process of revising the text, the narrative of our lives. In this sense, we may construct several narratives about ourselves, told from several points of view… We are capable of occupying each of these three positions, character, narrator, author, in turn [but] we cannot rest with any of them.[186]

Selfhood then, at least in Ricoeur's model, far from being an abstract concept or an existential absolute, is a sense of seperability from the other that is simultaneously defined by the distinction between the individual and others, and shaped by the story that only the self can construct.[187] The telling and retelling of the stories that shape self-hood allow the emplotment of prior moments, memories and interactions with others (whether factual or fictional) to forge insight into the self, such that an individual's identity is figured primarily through their repeated, remembered representations of experience rather than through the experiences themselves.

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[184] Paul Ricoeur, 'History as Narrative and Practice. Interview with Paul Ricoeur by Peter Kemp', *Philosophy Today* (1985), pp. 213 – 22 (p. 219).
[185] Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative identity', *Philosophy today 35, no. 1* (1991), pp. 73-81.
[186] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, pp. 309 – 310.
[187] Patrick Crowley, 'Paul Ricœur: the Concept of Narrative Identity, the Trace of Autobiography', *Paragraph 26*, 3 (2003), pp. 1-12.

> The story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself. This refiguration makes this life itself a cloth woven of stories told.[188]

In Ricoeur's model narratives of selfhood are prescriptive as well as descriptive, for the process of emplotment not only helps to make sense of events in the past, it also establishes imaginative parameters for the future.

Whilst Ricoeur's model is fascinating as a backdrop for my exploration of the reader's self-involvement in the biblical narrative there are inherent weaknesses in this approach. In particular Amanda Ford has suggested that as attractive as Ricoeur's model is, it says little about the reliability of the self as a narrator. Further, it "is built on assumptions about capacity and capability which can constrain our definitions of what it means to be selves", yet it does not satisfactorily develop any sense of communal or shared development of identity.[189] Despite these potential limitations, Ricoeur contends that selfhood and hermeneutics are overlapping areas of enquiry, with selfhood always dependent on hermeneutics, and hermeneutics always a journey toward self-discovery. He claims that "hermeneutics is the very deciphering of life in the mirror of the text."[190] In this tangle of reflectiveness, self-awareness, textuality and interpretation he offers a development of Kierkegaard's model of the Word as a mirror and provokes consideration of the significance of self-involvement within biblical narratology and reception.

5.3 Metaphor

> Metaphor presents itself as a strategy of discourse that, while preserving and developing creative powers of language, preserves and develops the heuristic power wielded by narrative.[191]

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[188] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative 3* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 246.
[189] Amanda Kirstine Ford, *The self in the mirror of the Scriptures: the hermeneutics and ethics of Paul Ricoeur* (University of Nottingham PhD diss., 2012), p. 12.
[190] Paul Ricoeur, Preface to Bultmann, *Essays on biblical interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 49-72.
[191] Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 6.

Ricoeur's examination of metaphor focuses on the creative power of language and, in particular, the manner in which metaphor produces new possibilities and configurations of the imagination. He claims that metaphor clothes ideas with images and turns these into a reality in the interpretation of the reader: "metaphor does not exist in itself but in and through an interpretation."[192] From these novel rapprochements new semantic fields are born and these compound forms extend the world of the reader, facilitating an understanding that was previously impossible. Metaphor is an extension of reality via unexpected representation. It claims not to be reality, but to be a mediation between existentially distinct realities, which, when combined together absurdly, can achieve emotional, imaginative and creative force. In part it is through the shock of the juxtaposition of two incompatible terms that a new depth of meaning is generated. Ricoeur suggests that metaphorical interpretation presupposes a literal meaning which it then destroys, forcing a new meaning or outlook:

> Metaphor is first and essentially an 'odd' predication that transgresses the semantic and cultural codes of a speaking community.[193]

The creative power of metaphor should therefore be understood to develop through juxtaposition and transgression. As Peter C. de Vries explains:

> Metaphor is a transgression of language codes and categories. Through its association of previously unrelated concepts, metaphor creates new, multiple meanings and changes the linguistic structures within which it operates. Metaphor is able to present truth, not as a verifiable presentation of the world as it is perceived by the reader, but as a manifestation of the world in a new way.[194]

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[192] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 50.
[193] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 161.
[194] Peter C. De Vries, *Appropriating Apocalyptic: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and the Discourse of Mark 13* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, MDiv diss., 1988) p. iv.

Much of Ricoeur's claims about the philosophical significance and creative power of metaphor might also be said about metalepsis.[195] Indeed, in many ways, metalepsis does with diegetic layers what metaphor does with words and I would suggest four areas of particular similarity:

1. Ricoeur suggests that metaphor is "the semantic impertinence" found in sentences where mutually unsuitable terms force new understanding, and I suggest that metalepsis may well be understood as narratological impertinence; for it achieves meaning through the obligation created by the mutual unsuitability and inappropriate interaction of seemingly ontologically distinct voices. The muddle of narrative stances that becomes overt in metalepsis forces interpreters to see these previously separate worlds within a shared continuum, and this leads towards a new understanding of reality.[196]
2. Ricoeur claims that a metaphor is "a calculated error, which brings together terms that do not go together and, by means of this apparent misunderstanding, causes a new hitherto unnoticed relation of meaning to spring up between the terms."[197] If metaphor is a calculated error at the level of the sentence, then metalepsis is a 'calculated error' at the diegetic level which occurs in the assimilation of narrating stances that do not logically fit together. Metalepsis 'lays bare' the previously covert relationship between the extra or hypo-diegetic world and the primary diegesis and invites consideration of the meaningfulness of this relationship.

[195] Ricoeur comes close to this position himself, suggesting that "metaphorization is a process at work between the encompassing narrative and the embedded narrative." *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 150.
[196] Paul Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling', *Critical Inquiry 5*, 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (1978), pp. 143-159 (p. 145).
[197] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, p. 51.

3. Ricoeur notes that, “metaphor transforms a self-defeating, sudden contradiction into a meaningful contradiction, imposing on the word a new sort of twist.”[198] Metalepsis similarly transforms a self-defeating, sudden contradiction into a meaningful contradiction, imposing on a narrative a new sort of twist. Just as metaphor obtains meaning from absurdity so metalepsis too creates new depth of meaning through the absurd transgression of thresholds. Metalepsis defeats realistic interpretations of texts demanding that narratives are understood via the threshold of the act of narration. This deeper understanding twists previous interpretations and rasies questions of the relatedness of the narrative world and the reader’s world.
4. Just as Ricoeur suggests that metaphor proceeds from the tensions between words that are juxtaposed in a figurative sentence and their relation to experienced reality, so metalepsis exists in the tension between narrative worlds figured in different narrative levels.[199] Where metaphor assimilates two hitherto distant terms and renders them comparable in the construction of a new reality, metalepsis brings together two previously distinct diegetic layers allowing concepts and characters from one to extend the parameters in the world of the other.[200]

This analysis of the similarities between metaphor as a figure of speech and metalepsis as a structural trope does not mean that metaphor or metalepsis are figurally related or hierarchically connected. Rather, the two phenomena produce parallel effects through the absurdity of language: metaphor does so through pairing words and transcending both their prior meanings and limitations, whilst metalepsis

[198] Ricoeur, *On Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 78.
[199] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics,* trans. by David Pellauer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 77.
[200] Ricoeur, *On Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 78.

does the same across the similarly absurd limitations of narrating thresholds. Both create new meaning through juxtaposition and both bring new life to language. Metaphor reveals there is no term within the cornucopia of human language that cannot be ransomed and combined to create newness, vision and an expanded horizon: I suggest that the same is true of the fusion of narrative layers.

Ricoeur's rigorous examination of metaphor, which is at first glance a simple figure of speech, provides a powerful window onto the potency of other devices that combine absurd juxtapositions to create a new meaning. When Ricoeur's understanding of the metaphorical process is applied to metalepsis, new light is shed upon the significance of the confusion between irrationally related narrative levels. Tangled narratological thresholds allow a revised vision of reality to be developed though the impertinence, tensions, and twists that blend realities and representations in the moment of metalepsis.

6. Synopsis

Auerbach, Kierkegaard and Ricoeur offer divergent approaches to the biblical text, and, in the case of Ricoeur and Kierkegaard, competing claims regarding the nature of competent hermeneutics. In the four close readings that follow, I will develop a cumulative sense of the hermeneutical implications of Biblical metalepsis. I contend that these moments of diegetic boundary breaking are highly relevant to consideration of Auerbach's claims regarding the autocratic trajectory of the biblical world view. Furthermore, Biblical metalepsis also brings into focus the counterpoint between Kierkegaard's hermeneutics of contemporaneity and the balance that Ricoeur suggests readers must find between "explaining" and "understanding". This

dichotomy finds some resolution in the double sense of metaleptic moments, where diegetic boundary breaking and overt the narratorial intervention are foregrounded. Here readers are simultaneously invited to locate their own world in reference to the world within the narrative, whilst also being challenged by the temporal paradox of the muddled diegesis. This manner of engagement and distanciation brings the perspectives of Kierkegaard and Ricoeur equally into play, without necessarily reconciling their differences. The value of Auerbach, Kierkegaard and Ricoeur as dialogue partners will be apparent in the hermeneutical explorations at the end of each of the next four chapters, and more particularly still, in the theological conclusions of Chapter 7, where the philosophical and theological stimulus they provide, as well as the illustrative potential of the range of frame breaking movements explored in Chapter 1, come into focus once again. Before this, in the following chapters, my primary focus is the identification of a range of diverse biblical metalepses, and the detailed consideration of their context and significance.

Chapter Three:

“Let the reader Understand”

1. Introduction

1.1 "Let the Reader Understand"

> And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, `I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet… But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything away; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days!" (Mark 13:5-17)

The so called 'mini-apocalypse' of Mark 13 functions as a final exhortation to Jesus' most immediate followers and an eschatological warning to the readers of the Gospel. It reads as continuous direct speech (13:5-37) during which the diegetic integrity of Jesus' address is maintained. The passage is universally acknowledged as an important component in Mark's story, indeed some suggest it represents the interpretative crux of Mark's narrative: "like a window which allows a close view of Markan circumstances."[1] Mark 13:2-37 is Jesus' longest speech in Mark's Gospel by a considerable margin. Occurring whilst Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives, immediately prior to Jesus' anointing at Bethany and subsequent passion in Jerusalem, the uninterrupted dialogue decelerates the plot and, combined with the overt and especially urgent eschatology, adds a sense of tension to the coming events. The text inherently reads as the culmination of Jesus' teaching, especially finishing as it does with the words, "What I say to you, I say to all: watch!" (Mark 13:37) There are no extra-diegetic comments or narrative interruptions, apart from

[1] W. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress,1974), p.110. Cf. Norman Peterson, who suggests that Mark validates the significance of Jesus' proleptic vision through the events that follow; that this chapter prophetically vindicates the subsequent passion and that it ought consequently to be understood as a crux of the Gospel. Norman R. Petersen, *Perspectives on Mark's Gospel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1980), p. 18. Cf. Norman R. Petersen, 'The reader in the gospel', *Neotestamentica* 18, (1984) pp. 38-51 (p. 43).

one interjection in verse 14, where a voice, which seems to be that of the narrator, appeals to the reader in the third person with a unique accent of urgency, saying: "Let the reader understand."

This verse attracts attention because it represents a narrative anomaly. It unquestionably relates to Daniel 9:27 from which the reference to the 'desolating sacrilege' derives:

> The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. (Dan. 9:26-27)

It is hard to imagine Jesus addressing Peter, James, John and Andrew in private as 'the reader,' and therefore consensus suggests that the appeal to the reader is a parenthesis in which the extra-diegetic narrative voice interrupts Jesus' discourse.[2] This being the case, the narratorial intervention is entirely unique in the Synoptic Gospels as a direct appeal to the reader. Mark's Gospel is replete with extra-diegetic interruptions, and the narrator routinely interrupts the progress of the narrative to add notes which facilitate the development of the story. However, these are barely noticed because they function as an integral feature of the threshold between the primary and extra-diegetic surfaces. An example of a very simple interruption effected by a narrative comment is found in 3:30.

> "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" -- for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:28-30).

[2] There are a number of commentators who do argue that it must be the disciples who are addressed as readers. See 1.2 below.

Here, to explain the discourse between Jesus and the scribes, Mark's narrator uses his role to deviate from the normal chronological movement of the narration to add a retrospective note of explanation, analeptically inserting a crucial clarification. Within Mark's Gospel there is an abundance of similar clarifying comments, additional details and narrative asides in the narrator's own voice. Such interventions are fundamental characteristics of the role of the narrator in Mark's Gospel. However, Mark 13:14 is the only occasion when the narrator seems to appeal directly to a reader and, moreover he does so by interrupting the speech of his main character. If this moment really does address the extra-diegetic reader it is an entirely anachronistic metaleptic intervention that transgresses the threshold between the primary and extra-diegetic layers, and it is therefore no surprise that some commentators have been reluctant to adopt this interpretation.

Mark 13:14 is surrounded by, and entangled in, a nexus of imperatives that contribute to urgent eschatology and invites shrewd exegesis.[3] The provenance of this pericope has been much discussed, and the relevance of the passage to the persecuted church sometime after 70 AD is routinely noted. This sense of urgency and the suggestion of an imminent parousia seems integral to the discourse and lends itself to a context of persecution that was experienced after the fall of the Temple. On this basis, a common conclusion is that "in Mark 13 we do not find an historical speech of Jesus."[4] Focus on the significance of the eschatological expectations revealed in the speech has, perversely, obscured the narrative significance of anomalous parenthesis. The maelstrom of higher criticism has

[3] Willem S. Vorster, 'Literary reflections on Mark 13: 5-37: A narrated speech of Jesus', *Neotestamentica 21*, 1987, pp. 203-224.

[4] Morna Hooker, 'Trial and tribulation in Mark xiii', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (1982), pp. 78-99 (p. 79). "It is likely, furthermore, that the urgent reference to the Danielic "abomination of desolation" in 13:14 ("let the reader understand!") calls attention to an event that either has already occurred or is prominently on the horizon, and that event probably has something to do with incidents that occurred in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem during the Great Revolt."

precipitated diverse suggestions about the appeal to the reader as a theological interpolation, a redaction, or an historical utterance of Jesus. However, these approaches may have obscured the unique narrative effect of the direct appeal.

1.2 Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that the parenthesis “Let the reader understand” represents a direct appeal from the narrator to the Gospel reader. When viewed as an interjection that muddles the threshold around Jesus’ speech, Mark 13:14 functions as a moment of metalepsis that solicits urgent understanding. The imperative exhortation demands that readers of the Gospel understand the ‘signs of the times’ and it invites them to recognise that Jesus’ subsequent warnings are also relevant to them. I contend that “Let the reader understand” is the most overt contamination of narrative layers in Mark’s Gospel. It achieves an unexpected interruption in Jesus’ speech and creates a unique transgression of the boundaries between the characters within the story and those outside it that are reading or listening to the Gospel.

There are good reasons to regard that the parenthesis as a Markan metalepsis rather than an aside from Jesus and these arguments are axiomatic to the hermeneutical observations I pursue later. In this Chapter I will therefore consider the following four arguments.

1. The context of Chapter 13 supports the claim that the voice addressing the “reader” is that of the narrator appealing to his extra-diegetic audience, rather than Jesus prophetically and opaquely referring to future readers of Daniel, or to Peter, James and John, who were the only disciples present with him at this point in the story.

2. Mark interrupts his primary narrative discourse on several other occasions and includes frequent explanatory parentheses in his narrative: given the significance of the discourse in chapter 13 it is conceivable that Mark sought to highlight elements of Jesus' teaching here in line with other narratorial parentheses.
3. Jesus consistently refers to his "hearers" but this is the only example in any Gospel where he may be claimed to refer to "readers." Given the oral tradition it seems impossible that Jesus imagined a multitude of literate owners of Danielic scrolls in his audience.[5] None of the references to reading in Mark's Gospel can be considered comparable to this direct appeal.
4. Matthew and Luke repeat chapter 13 almost verbatim, but depart significantly from the sense of 13:14. This indicates that the parenthesis was confusing even in its first interpretations; it was considered worthy of clarification; and both Matthew and Luke saw the parenthesis as an invitation to themselves as readers of Mark to 'understand', to interpret and to contextualize the warning highlighted by the parenthesis.

In the following analysis, as these four arguments are expanded, a cumulative sense emerges that Mark 13:14 represents a direct appeal to the readers of the Gospel. As such, the verse represents a significant breach of the normal boundaries between diegetic worlds. This conclusion is of hermeneutical significance, inviting observations which are developed in the final section of the Chapter regarding Mark's approach to time, his expectations regarding readerly response and self-involvement and his understanding of the boundaries between the representation of reality in his writing and the world of the reader.

[5] Contra Fowler who argues that the sole example of the narrator addressing an assembled audience directly is found in 9:41 "because you are of Christ." Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, p. 132.

2. Permeable Thresholds

2.1 Daniel's reader or Mark's reader?

There are two alternative and competing interpretations of 13:14. The first is the approach that contends that "Let the reader understand" is an appeal from Jesus to his own audience, inviting them as readers of Daniel to interpret the signs of their own time in light of the 'abomination of desolation'. The second possibility is that Mark is appealing to readers of his own writing, inviting them to shrewd understanding of the text he writes. [6] This dichotomy is of particular significance, for if the appeal is part of Jesus' speech the verse is unusual, but surely not metaleptic. Jesus' appeal to readers of Daniel is unexpected, but if he is challenging his own audience to be better exegetes then the verse is not an apostrophe, nor is it even a change of direction. On the other hand if in this moment Mark is interjecting to interrupt Jesus and draw attention to a point of particular interpretative significance for his own reader, then the verse really is a tangled loop and a contamination of the threshold between the primary and extra-diegetic worlds. This change of direction, with a switch between Jesus' audience in the primary diegesis and extra-diegetic reader of the Gospel, suggests that the clause is similar to classical apostrophes, (especially as the voice addressing the audience is indistinguishable from that of Jesus just as was the case in classical apostrophes on stage). This is very rare in

[6] There are very few other possibilities. Occasional reference has been made to this verse as evidence of apocalyptic schema behind the Gospel (Cf. M. Eugene Boring: "The narrative as a whole is conceived in an apocalyptic framework." M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2006), p. 357. I agree broadly with R.H Gundry that chapter 13 does not represent an "apocalyptic code announcing the end." Consequently it seems to me inappropriate to assert that the primary significance of the parenthesis is to fulfil apocalyptic topoi. It does not seem justified to connect the parenthesis to the second person invitation of apocalyptic visions and suggest that this is evidence of an overarching apocalyptic framework. Were this the case it might be expected that the parenthesis would be addressed to a second person and might operate more clearly to trigger the apocalyptic resonance it was supposed to reinforce. Cf. Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross, Volume 1 (Chapters 1-8)* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 1.

the biblical canon and the only other example in Mark that is cited by scholars is in 9:41:

> For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.[7]

Willi Marxsen was one of the first scholars to bifurcate interpretations according to these options, and with him I suggest that, "In consideration, there are two options: [the verse either appeals to] the reader of the book of Daniel ... or the reader of the Apocalyptic leaflet" (*das Danielbuch... oder apokalyptische Flugblatt*).[8]

Daniel's reader

There are a range of arguments that support the claim that 13:14 represents a call for urgent understanding of prophecy from the book of Daniel. Firstly, some suggest that appeal to the reader functions as an aspect of Midrash and that Jesus' speech in this chapter should be understood as part of this milieu. Secondly, this reading removes the sense of transgression between the layers of the narrative evident in the alternative reading: if the verse is Jesus addressing his friends then the diegetic structures and integrity are maintained in the manner that might be expected. Finally, the verse is consistent linguistically with the rest of Jesus' speech in the chapter.

Lars Hartman attempted to reconstruct a Jewish milieu of "parenesis" (exhortation) through which chapter 13 could be best understood.[9] Accordingly he

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[7] Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-response criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (London: A&C Black, 2001), p. 106.

[8] Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel,* trans. by R. A. Harrisville (Abingdon: Routledge, 1969) p.110. See also William L. Lane, 'From Historian to Theologian: Milestones in Markan Scholarship', *Review & Expositor* 75.4 (1978), pp. 601-617 (p 614). Pioneering what he termed, "redaction criticism", Marxsen emphasized the conclusion that "let the reader understand" adds urgency to the eschatology of the whole Gospel. For similar views see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Galilaa and Jerusalem* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936) and Ernest Best, *Mark: the Gospel as story* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1983). p. 29.

[9] Lars Hartman, *Prophecy interpreted: The formation of some Jewish apocalyptic texts and of the eschatological discourse Mark 13 par,* trans. By Neil Tomkinson (Lund: Gleerup, 1966), p. 236. A

suggested that the speech should be understood as an example of Jesus' method of Midrash, in this instance focused on Daniel.[10] As a consequence he concluded that the reader who is invited to understand is "the reader of Daniel – not of Mark."[11] Thomas R. Hatina, like Hartman, emphasised the priority of Mark's narrative context over speculative historical reconstructions and suggested that Mark consistently appeals to Old Testament text through allusion. He claims that understanding this is fundamental to establishing the proper context for the verse.[12] The primary conclusions of both (that Mark 13 is Jesus' own exhortative exegesis of eschatological prophecy), seems valid. It is not, however, necessary to infer from this context that the parenthesis of 13:14 must also be Jesus' own words. Indeed it is distinctly possible that chapter 13 includes an authentic representation of Jesus' words whilst the parenthesis is a narratorial intervention.

Larry Perkins arrives at the same conclusion as Hatina and Hartman for quite different reasons. He suggests that if the parenthesis of Mark 13:14 is an address to the extra-diegetic readers of the Gospel, then it significantly interrupts the rhetoric of Mark's narrative. Consequently he concludes that it makes more sense to understand it as an aside from Jesus to his actual audience. As Jesus addresses Peter, James, John and Andrew *in private* during chapter 13, Perkins argues that the

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similar argument is made by Rudolf Bultmann, 'anaginosko, anagnoi', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 1*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans), pp. 343 -44.

[10] Hartman eschewed the traditional eschatological focus and instead emphasized the exhortative nature of the Jesus' speech in chapter 13. His view was that this passage functions as a "farewell discourse" (Ibid., p. 134). Cf. D. Miller, and P. Miller, *The Gospel of Mark as Midrash on Earlier Jewish and New Testament Literature*, (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 303.

[11] Cf. Larry Perkins, '"Let the Reader Understand": A Contextual Interpretation of Mark 13: 14', *Bulletin for Biblical Research 16*, no. 1 (2006), pp. 95-104 (p. 103).

[12] Thomas Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative,* JSNTSSup 232 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 29 and 371. See also M. A. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989) and S. E. Porter, 'Can Traditional Exegesis Enlighten Literary Analysis of the Fourth Gospel? An Examination of the Old Testament Fulfilment Motif and the Passover Theme', in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. by C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, JSNTSup 104 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 396-428.

appeal to understand is consistent with "Jesus' frequent corrections of his disciples' misunderstandings."[13] Perkins prefers the notion of an intact diegetic universe uninterrupted by appeal to the reader – and this is understandable, for it increases the integrity of the primary discourse. Perkins is at pains to suggest that "this clause is part of Jesus' discourse because its language fits the way that Jesus in Mark challenges people to read - that is, interpret correctly - the Old Testament."[14] He concludes that the parenthesis is addressed specifically to the disciples as readers of Daniel. There are a number of issues with this model that limit its probability. Firstly, Perkins suggests that "the third-person form [in the parenthesis] parallels other instructions that Jesus gives to his disciples."[15] Given that the disciples are nowhere else addressed as readers this comparison seems a little tenuous. Secondly Perkins asserts that the readers' receipt of the warning is of secondary importance when compared to that of the disciples. He comments that "readers of discourse *also* hear the injunction."[16] This model seems to neglect the notion of the Gospel as narrative shaped for an audience, and supposes that Mark did not have the reader in mind when he wrote.[17]

Beyond the notions above, that the discourse represents midrash, that Jesus often challenges his disciples to understand and that an aside from Jesus maintains the integrity of the diegesis, there are linguistic reasons for accepting the suggestion

[13] Larry Perkins, '"Let the Reader Understand"', p. 95.
[14] *Loc. cit.* Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and mythology* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 11. Cf. Joanna Dewey, 'Oral methods of structuring narrative in Mark', *Union Seminary Review 43*, no. 1 (1989), pp. 32-44 (p. 35).
[15] Larry Perkins, '"Let the Reader Understand"', p. 95.
[16] *Loc. cit.*
[17] Indeed, as a text shaped for reception it is more reasonable to assert that readers of the discourse hear the injunction, and secondarily, that Jesus' own audience may be addressed.

that the verse appeals to the reader in Jesus own audience.[18] In particular "Let the reader understand" fits in with the quartet of other warnings within the speech each having a structural similarity that is especially evident if Greek word order is maintained: "The one reading – let him understand" (13:14); "The ones in Judea – let them flee" (13:14); "The one standing on the roof top – let him not descend" (13:15); "The one in the field – let him not turn back" (13:16), "The ones who are pregnant and the ones suckling – pray that your flight isn't in winter" (13:17). Each of these constructs functions as an exhortative imperative - an observation that goes unnoticed amongst those who argue for the parenthesis as an appeal to the public reader of Daniel, though it may have strengthened this case.[19]

Mark's Reader

The reasons for suggesting that 13:14 is an appeal to the reader of Mark are more varied than the reasons for the alternative. These include suggestions regarding an apocalyptic super-structure for the speech; claims that the verse is a later redaction; evidence of grammatical inconsistency which makes the appeal a dark clue; and the contention that the Gospel is written to be read aloud.

Norman Perrin suggests that the narrative stages within the chapter were typical within the apocalypse genre and concludes of the parenthesis that, as a direct appeal to the audience, it is Mark's attempt to replicate the frequent second person

[18] For detailed analysis see Shane M. Kraeger, *A structural analysis, translation and grammatical commentary of Mark 13* (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012) Kraeger does not however draw conclusions from the grammatical analysis he develops.

[19] However, there are reasons to contend that the appeal to the reader should be seen as separated from the other warnings because of the use of the adverb tote ("then"). This is significant because it isolates the "discerning reader" of 13:14 temporally from the suffering disciples of 13:16-18. The narrative describes the reader reading in the time up to and including the abomination of desolation, and suggests that "then," or "at this time," the discerning disciples will be fleeing or suffering thereafter.

'you' of apocalyptic discourse.[20] According to his model this moment within the Gospel is a demonstration that Mark was attempting to include the reader, like the disciples, in the privileged 'inner circle' who had access to Jesus' special teaching and that this direct engagement with the audience is a clear indicator of the apocalyptic provenance of Mark 13. Perrin reads the parenthesis as a key indicator that the chapter is the third part of an apocalyptic drama with three "realistic narrative" acts. He argues that 13:9-13 is about Christians "preaching and being delivered up,"[21] so that "when the third act is complete the drama will reach its climax in the coming of Jesus as Son of man."[22] Perrin's apocalyptic focus has been revised and revisited frequently, for example in Mary Ann Beavis' commentary. She interprets chapter 13 as "an apocalyptic interlude" in between five scenes of flowing narrative.[23] Similarly Vernon K. Robbins has suggested that chapter 13 is the "interweaving of apocalyptic discourse amongst other multiple textures."[24] Whilst neither these, nor other publications have repeated Perrin's framework, his influence is apparent in the continued frequency of articles referring to Mark as an apocalyptic text.[25] Such approaches typically also adopt the conclusion that 13:14 is an appeal to the Markan reader. The fundamental weakness of these interpretations is that, even if Mark 13 as a whole is an apocalyptic text, asserting that those who supposedly 'accompany the seer' are invited to see themselves as 'readers' is both

[20] Norman Perrin, *The New Testament, an Introduction: Proclamation and Parenesis, Myth and History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 162.
[21] Ibid., p. 144
[22] *Loc. cit.*
[23] Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 143.
[24] Vernon K. Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the Gospel of Mark', in *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. by Duane F. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp.11-44 (p. 44). Also, Vernon K. Robbins, 'Rhetorical Ritual: Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark 13', in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. by Gregory Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), pp. 95-121 (p. 119).
[25] Though Bruce Malina has commented, "The nineteenth-century categories labelled "Apocalyptic" and "Eschatology" are not useful for a historical description of first-century concerns and experiences. Something like Worseology and Nextology better mirror first-century perceptions." Bruce J. Malina, 'Exegetical eschatology, the peasant present and the final discourse genre: The case of Mark 13', *Biblical Theology Bulletin 32,* no. 2 (2002), p. 57.

unprecedented and improbable. It seems much more likely that the call to 'understand' is an urgent challenge to comprehend eschatological events unfolding in their own reality rather than a cryptic call toward an apocalyptic hermeneutic. Consequently observations of apocalyptic structure, whether valid or not, are redundant in terms of interpreting 13:14.

Rudolf Pesch understood Mark 13 as a lacuna interpolated into the Gospel. Furthermore, he saw appeals within this passage to "watch" and to "be aware" as potentially even later redactions.[26] The basis of this conclusion was Pesch's conviction that the Gospel has a six-fold structure. He suggested that each of these sections contain a regular 'stoichiometric' structure but that Chapter 13 doesn't fit into this framework. Instead Pesch suggests that the bulk of the chapter was a Jewish apocalyptic tract which was reinterpreted by Mark and included wholesale. This claim (also made by S.G.F Brandon), and the further suggestion that Mark's readers would have recognized this structure, bear little weight given the heterogeneous interpretations that both preceded and have succeeded Pesch's assertion.[27] Pesch's model carries limited weight. Dependence on an unwieldy hypothesis regarding the superstructure of the Gospel that ought to be understood by readers, but that never actually has been, is a decidedly limiting factor.

Tim Geddert and Lloyd Gaston, quite separately, see 13:14 as a cryptic clue to the reader of Mark.[28] Geddert suggests that "Mark deliberately did not tell the reader which 'abomination' was expected, and most importantly, Mark made it quite

[26] Rudolf Pesch, *Neherwartunqen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1968), pp. 74- 77.
[27] Cf. David Wenham, 'Recent study of Mark 13: Part 2', *TSF Bulletin 72* (1975), pp. 1-9. "We find it highly unlikely that Mark's readers would have recognised Pesch's analysis of Mark's Gospel" (p. 2). For Brandon's model see S.G. Brandon, 'The Date of the Markan Gospel', *NTS 7* (1960), pp. 126-41.
[28] Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (London: A&C Black, 1989). Lloyd Gaston, *No stone on another: Studies in the significance of the fall of Jerusalem in the synoptic gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 8-61.

clear that more is being implied [through "let the reader understand"] than is being said."[29] He contends that throughout Mark's Gospel, "subtle clues enable the discerning reader to grasp points Mark is intending to communicate… These subtle clues [become explicit] in Mark 13, where two 'watchwords' are used calling disciples to discernment and discipleship."[30] Lloyd Gaston suggests that the key to understanding Mark 13 lies in the destruction of the temple, which is why Mark locates the scene at the entrance to the temple (Mark 13:1). Gaston suggests that the original context of Daniel's 'abomination of desolation' was vague enough to allow Christian appropriation of the phrase in 40AD when Emperor Caligula ordered his own image to be erected in the Jerusalem temple. At that time there was no question of the abomination bringing the kind of destruction associated with Mark's apocalypse. However, when that crisis passed, the oracle (and with it the phrase 'abomination of desolation') was reinterpreted eschatologically with the expected destruction of Jerusalem in mind.[31] Mark was able to reinterpret the phrase 'abomination of desolation' eschatologically, focusing on the destruction of the temple and the arrival of a personal antichrist because the original Danielic context for the phrase ceased to be viewed as the only historical reference point for the oracle (Antiochus IV Epiphanes' desecration of the Temple in 167 BC being closely paralleled by Caligula's actions two hundred years later).[32]

Gaston insists that the parenthesis is Mark's own cryptic allusion intended to highlight the significance of the grammatically anomalous masculine participle *hestēkota* ("set up"), for *hestēkota* does not agree in gender with its neuter modifying

[29] Ibid., p. 207
[30] Ibid., pp. 256.
[31] Wenham, 'Recent study of Mark 13', p. 4.
[32] Cf. Charles H. Dodd, 'The fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation', *The Journal of Roman Studies 37*, no. 1-2 (1947), pp. 47-54.

noun, *bdelugma* ("desolating").[33] Gaston comments that the parenthesis is "conservatively interpreted to refer either [to the book of Daniel, or the apocalypse], but surely there is a third possibility… namely that these words are from Mark to indicate the significance of the grammatical anomaly."[34] Gaston asserts that *hestekota* must refer to the anti-Christ personally, rather than to a plural and impersonal jumble of stones, and that Mark anticipates that imminent persecution will be inaugurated by a personal Antichrist. Mark, he suggests, is attempting to ensure Christians do not mistake the abomination, but rather understand it as a parousial precursor.

Whilst Geddert and Gaston are right about the challenge interpreting 13:14 presents, it seems unnecessary to claim that Mark held a secretive, nuanced understanding of the 'abomination of desolation' and attempted to point believers cryptically towards an eschatological anti-Christ.[35] Such a theory is too convoluted, especially given that there is an adequate, and much simpler interpretation; namely that Mark is highlighting the fact that as he writes, Jesus' warning has already been realised and the disaster Jesus suggests is imminent is now a present reality for the Markan reader. I would also note that the abomination referred to could be either the idolatrous image set up, or the deity it represents, and ambiguity of gender might therefore be useful to Mark.[36] Furthermore Mark uses a masculine participle with a neuter noun elsewhere when the noun represents a personal being (cf. Mark 9:20 and 26) and Gaston has overstated the unusualness of grammatical constructions

[33] Grant Osbourne and Matthew C. Williams, 'The Two/ Four-Source View', in *Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*, ed. by Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2002), p. 58.
[34] Gaston, *No stone on* another, p. 28.
[35] *Loc. cit.*
[36] Adela Yarbro Collins, 'Composition and Performance in Mark 13', in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, ed. by Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton and Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 539-560 (p. 546).

that contravene normative semantic rules. Such instances are defined in Latin as *constructio ad sensum* and are frequently found in English as examples of 'notional concord' where agreement between terms is found in the notion rather than the form of a noun.[37] For all these reasons it is difficult to accept the suggestion that "Let the reader be aware" refers exclusively to Mark's subtle grammatical cue.

Robert Fowler has analysed the bridge-building strategies of Mark's rhetoric and paid significant attention to the parenthesis of 13:14. He suggests that:

> Characters within the story do not address "the reader" outside the story, at least not in ancient literature… The parenthesis makes no sense at all as a statement by Jesus.[38]

Whilst the first part of this observation maybe an oversimplification (cf. Chapter 1 section 4.1 above), Fowler supports his claim with arguments about the narrative effect of the passage – especially when read aloud.

> Jesus delivers the chapter long discourse, full of the veiled, figurative language of apocalyptic. Although the disciples remain on the stage throughout the apocalyptic discourse, we in the audience tend to forget their presence because the entire discourse is spoken over their heads and directly at us.[39]

The assumption that the audience is necessarily an aural one colours Fowler's reading. For example Fowler suggests that the parenthesis is quite possibly, "a kind of wink or stage direction to an *anagnostes* (a lector or professional public reader) reciting the Gospel of Mark before an assembled audience."[40] Fowler notes:

> The emphatic second-person plural pronouns [frequent in chapter 13] ostensibly engage the four disciples on the stage, but they are too emphatic to do only that. Rather, they raise the intensity of Jesus' language to such a pitch that the story level is transcended… The last verse of the chapter spells out

[37] Andrew James Bell, *The Latin Dual & Poetic Diction: Studies in Numbers and Figures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).
[38] Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand,* p. 83
[39] Ibid., p.85
[40] Ibid., p. 84

> explicitly at whom the speech is really aimed: "And what I say to you I say to all: Watch". This statement is about as close as an ancient author can come to direct address by a character within the story to the audience outside.[41]

Whilst the observation about the diegetic frame-breaking is useful, the conclusion that this is exceptional amongst ancient texts is erroneous and it is hard to justify the conclusion that the reader addressed in parenthesis is different from the audience.[42] Indeed, address to the audience in contemporaneous texts is well evidenced and it is actually Fowler's model of the inclusion of a note to a lector within the body of the narrative that is without precedent. Given that the focus of the exhortation is the desecration of the temple it seems more reasonable to assert that Mark is conscious of the risks facing his own readers as he writes, rather than that he is recording historically an address to four disciples which is incidentally of urgent importance to his readers or appealing ambiguously to those who will read in public to an audience.

Summary

The claim that Mark 13:14 addresses the reader of Daniel is supported by three strong arguments. It is indisputable that Jesus' public teaching was akin to Midrash, as is evident in some of his most significant pronouncements (for example, Luke 4, "It is written"; Matthew 6, "You have heard it said… but I tell you" and Mark 7:6, "Did not Isaiah prophesy of you…"). Mark 13, a speech of singular importance that is deeply rooted in Danielic visions, may therefore be legitimately understood as Midrash. It is also true that the imperative 'understand' in 13:14 matches the subsequent imperatives embedded in Jesus' speech. Nevertheless the most important argument supporting this view is that an aside to the Markan reader strains the narrative structure unacceptably, and that therefore the parenthesis must be

[41] Ibid., p.86
[42] Cf. Oliver Taplin, 'Did Greek dramatists write stage instructions?' *The Cambridge Classical Journal 23* (1977), pp. 121-132.

understood as an appeal to the reader of Daniel. This conclusion may be easily avoided if the verse is understood as a moment of metalepsis, for this device makes a Markan interruption and transgression of narrative structures entirely explicable. Indeed, if the verse is understood as a metaleptic transgression of diegetic thresholds then the appeal functions just as ancient apostrophes, seeking to grab the attention and heighten the engagement of the reader of Mark's text. It is unlikely that a character would undertake an anonymous appeal to the ubiquitous 'reader' of scripture when he was in private with his closest disciples, and that in this context he would use a third person construct and language that belied the intimacy of the context. Conversely it seems entirely plausible that the narrator might intervene incongruously because of the context evident at the time of his writing so as to highlight the particular prophetic relevance to his audience of Jesus' words. 13:14 therefore makes most sense as a moment of metalepsis born out of eschatological urgency. Ironically, other arguments supporting the idea that the parenthesis is a metaleptic aside to the Markan reader are relatively weak. Claims that the verse addresses the reader in an attempt to fit in with an apocalyptic structure; that it is a redaction or interpolation; that it is an overly subtle clue; or that it is evidence of an aural context, are all disappointing.

I broadly agree with Petersen, Geddert and others who suggest that Mark 13 represents a call to understand and interpret wisely the whole Gospel. There seems genuine value in the notion that "Let the reader understand" invites abnormal participation from the reader. Equally, Perrin's claim that the appeal to the reader deepens the readers' sense that they are part of a privileged audience is plausible. Robbin's notion that the parenthesis adds complexity to the intertextual surface of the chapter is compelling, Pesch's observation that the imperatives to "watch" and

"be aware" are critical to understanding the chapter is valid, as is Fowler's observation that the verse must inevitably feel to the reader like a direct appeal. The parenthesis' obvious function is as an alert to the reader and the listening audience, inviting them to interpret Jesus' words within their own social context. This view has been promoted by Ernest Best and Harry Gamble who, without any effort to construct a previously obscure super-structure, claim that the parenthesis operates as "a riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma."[43] Put simply, the parenthesis "let the reader understand" achieves unavoidable effect upon actual readers of Mark's Gospel. Complex models regarding genre, grammatical anomalies and aural audiences do not achieve an incontrovertible sense that the parenthesis appeals to Mark's reader. However, treating it as a metaleptic interruption instantly negates the most significant concern of those who suggest that the verse can only function as an appeal to the reader of Daniel.

2.2 Parenthesis in Mark

In some senses Mark 13.14 is not entirely unique in the Gospel, for, as is expected in any narrative, Mark includes numerous other explanatory parentheses in his text. These intrusions are either meta-diegetic moments of 'explicit commentary' by the narrator, including parenthetical clauses introduced by *gar* (for), *hoti* (that, because or since), and *hina* (in order that), or are the 'implicit commentary' of statements made by characters within the story.[44] Obvious examples of Markan parenthesis include the addition of detail, such as in 5:42 ("She was twelve years old"); cultural explanation such as in 7:3 ("For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands"); translation, such as in 7:11 ("That is, given to God"), 15:16

[43] Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, p. 1; Ernest Best, 'The Gospel of Mark: Who was the Reader?' *Irish Biblical Studies 11*, no. 124 (1989), p. 130 and Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Reader in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian texts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995) pp. 8-9.
[44] Ibid., p. 100.

("That is, the praetorium"), 15:22 ("Which means the place of a skull"); and theological interpretations such as in 7:19 ("Thus he declared all foods clean."). Greek punctuation did not include textual demarcation of parenthesis, but through the pronounced movement from primary diegetic plot or discourse to extra diegetic commentary the supplementary and incidental character of these comments is clearly evident.

Comparing the parenthesis of 13:14 with other narrative insertions, Craig Evans posits a functional and linguistic consistency. He comments, "This parenthetic comment is Markan [is comparable to] his other insertions in 2:10; 3:30; 7:11, 19 and may be intended to alert readers to Dan. 12:5–13."[45] Whilst there is no precise taxonomy of such narrative operations or diegetic intrusions in the text it is sufficient to note that there is a significant frequency of such interruptions in Mark's narrative and that it is certainly not unusual that the narrator of Mark's Gospel interrupt the progress of the primary diegesis to elucidate some point of importance.

Of the narratological interventions in the Gospel, the closest comparable example to the parenthesis of 13:14 is that of 7:11. This stands out as the only other occasion within the Gospel where the voice of the narrator interjects directly into Jesus' speech. These two examples share the unique significance of representing occasions when an extra-diegetic voice interrupts the speech of the most central character within the primary diegesis.

> And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, `Honor your father and your mother'; and, `He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'; but you say, `If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God) -- then you no longer permit

[45] Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20. Word Bible Commentary 34B* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p.320.

> him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do" (Mark 7:9-13).

"That is, given to God" provides a parenthetical translation of the Aramaic term *Corban* and is indisputably a direct interjection in a speech of Jesus. This intervention can only be understood as a extra-diegetic voice, for it is inconceivable that this parenthesis was actually Jesus translating his own use of Aramaic for the sake of his hearers. Whilst Gospel readers might be unfamiliar with Aramaic, for Jesus' own audience it was their lingua franca. Translation elsewhere in the Gospel occurs exclusively through the voice of the narrator (cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 15:22; 15:34). It is therefore unsurprising that the interruption of 7:11 is unanimously accepted as a translation proffered for the sake of clarity to a non-Aramaic audience in the voice of the narrator.[46] The significance of this is that 7:11 establishes a precedent through which the parenthesis of 13:14 should be understood. Mark's narrator does interrupt the discourse of the primary diegesis, and even intervenes in the direct speech of Jesus. The parenthesis of 13:14 can therefore be most simply understood as an intervention seeking to emphasise or clarify the words of Jesus in the same mode as the less controversial interruption "That is given to God" found in 7:11.

2.3 References to reading in Mark

The audience of the Gospel is frequently referred to in Jesus' direct speech; so that whenever he appeals to his own 'hearer' a coalescence of narrative layers is achieved which makes the reader *feel* addressed. An example of this would be Jesus' comment in Mark 4:11, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables." The use of the second person

[46] J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Aramaic Qorbān Inscription from Jebel Ḫallet Eṭ-Ṭûri and Mark 7: 11/Matt 15: 5', *Journal of Biblical Literature 78,* no. 1 (1959), pp. 60-65.

participle, “you,” naturally includes the reader within Jesus’ audience. This process is even more overt in moments when Jesus appeals directly to his hearers, for example in Mark 4:9 Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Nevertheless, the petition to the “reader” in Mark 13:14 is unique. Consequently, there is a degree of incongruity about the phrase. Even though “Let the reader understand” fits within the structural paradigm of Markan extra-diegetic interventions, its narrative function is unusual in its prima facie appeal to the reader. Larry Perkins has correctly noted that no other narrative comment or notes of explanation in Mark’s gospel appeal to an additional text as the key for interpreting the event or comments embedded in the story.[47] Furthermore, there are no other instances in Mark’s Gospel of overt reference to the reader. Consequently, much more than other meta-diegetic commentary it intrudes in a manner that necessarily raises questions about the “reader” of the parenthesis. Significantly the parenthesis may provoke a different response from the first century reader as compared to the modern reader, as Mark’s disclosure of a ‘presumed reader’ evokes an awareness of historical distance in the hermeneutics of those who follow subsequently.

Given the lack of other overt Markan or canonical appeals to the reader, it is unsurprising that there are divergent interpretations regarding whom is being addressed in the parenthesis. It is decidedly the case that the text represents a significantly less muddled literary framework if the aside is actually an address of Jesus to his disciples and their contemporaneous readers of Daniel. In addition Jesus’ arguments about interpretation of Torah and his criticism of hermeneutical

[47] Perkins, *Let the Reader Understand*, p. 96.

conventions (common in debate between rabbis) can be offered as a background to the verse.[48] Perkins adopts this approach:

> It is not unexpected then that the Markan narrator, given this strong Jewish tradition and the Jewish setting of the story, would have his protagonist engage other Jewish religious leaders in debates regarding specific sacred texts. This would be a normal means for establishing his hero's bona fides as prophet and perhaps even messianic leader, establishing justice and righteousness through his understanding of, teaching about, and personal modelling of these sacred precepts and stories.[49]

He notes that there are three other occasions in Mark's Gospel where Jesus employs the verb 'to read,' namely, 2:25, 12:10 and 12:26:

> And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry?" (Mark 2:25).
>
> [Jesus said to them,] "Have you not read this scripture: `The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'?" (Mark 12:10).
>
> Jesus said to them, "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God... Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush?" (Mark 12:24-26).[50]

In each of these cases Jesus uses the phrase, *oudepote anegnōte* (Have you not read). So the phrase "Let the reader understand" (*ho anaginōskōn noeito*) is distinct from the other references to reading in terms of grammar, syntax and vocabulary. This distinction alone is not sufficient to dismiss the suggestion that 13:14 represents the same kind of appeal to the reader as those found in his dismissal of the Pharisees', priests' and elders' readership, however, there are two other good reasons why the parenthesis of 13:14 should not be read in the same vein as 2:25, 12:10 or 12:26.

[48] Gerhard Kittel (ed.),*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 343–44.
[49] Perkins, *Let the Reader Understand*, p. 98.
[50] Ibid., p. 97.

Firstly, in each of the other instances Jesus is involved in explicit controversy with various Jewish leaders about Torah hermeneutics and application. In all three cases Jesus appeals to elements in the Jewish canon, offers a specific, somewhat unusual interpretation, and uses this as the basis to deal with a question or criticism addressed as a challenge to him and his mission. However, in 13:14 there is no controversy, no hermeneutical debate, no need for Jesus or Mark to justify Jesus' actions, and the setting is intimate rather than public. It is highly implausible that Jesus would address his closest disciples obliquely as "the one reading" and the appeal to 'the reader' therefore does not naturally translate as a request from Jesus that his disciples maintain discerning midrash in days of eschatological crisis. "Have you not read," fulfils an entirely different narrative purpose from "Let the reader understand."

Secondly, it is also important to observe that the narrator in 13:14 is focusing on the issue of understanding, *not* the issue of reading. Whereas readership in the other three cases is about validating or justifying an application of scripture, readership in 13:14 is about being prepared, aware and insightful. As Perkins says,

> While these two activities, understanding and reading, are certainly connected, the force of the imperative is related to understanding in contrast to reading. This makes this text somewhat different from the other three contexts in this Gospel's narrative.[51]

It is also noteworthy that when Jesus is particularly emphatic in his address, or wants to draw attention to a teaching, his most frequent idiomatic expression is, "Let the person who has ears to hear, hear" (Mark 4:9 and 23). This proverbial expression would surely be expected if the parenthesis is a moment of emphasis for Jesus' predominantly illiterate disciples and it would certainly have given sufficient accent of

[51] Ibid., p. 102.

urgency to his words. Whilst Mark alludes to Jesus' listening audience frequently within the frame of the narrative, and he recounts Jesus challenging the readership of religious leaders occasionally, 13:14 remains unique as an address to readers who are most definitely not the hypocritical scholars he opposed. The parenthesis of 13:14 should therefore be understood as an appeal to an entirely different reading audience from any of those who interact within the primary diegesis.

2.4 Comparison with the Synoptic Accounts

Decontamination in Matthew

> So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! (Matthew 24:15-19)

Whilst Mark's parenthesis could, in theory, apply to the future public reader of Daniel or to the disciples as interpreters of biblical prophecy, the precise identity of the voice appealing to the reader remains ambiguous. Matthew's text is different from Mark's in two particularly significant ways. Firstly the audience being addressed by Jesus is different. Mark's Jesus addresses just a select inner core of disciples: Peter, James, John and Andrew, and the intimacy of this interaction makes it much less likely that the third person appeal to 'the reader' is aimed at the disciples as readers. However, Matthew's text refers less specifically to 'the disciples.' This larger audience makes it seem slightly more possible that Jesus is referring to some, or all of them, as readers of Daniel's prophecies. The less intimate setting in Matthew's narrative makes an exhortation on the importance of discerning discipleship and interpretation feel more appropriate. Secondly, and much more significantly, Matthew introduces explicit

reference to the prophet Daniel, where Mark only alluded to his words. Matthew says, “So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel… flee to the mountains” (24:15).

The effect of these differences is that the confusion of Mark’s parenthetical intrusion is significantly reduced. The appeal to the reader remains, but a surface reading allows this appeal to be understood as a direct instruction from Jesus to the disciples, which also applies ‘coincidentally’ to the reader (as do all his instructions to varying degrees). This approach means that the reader of the Gospel of Matthew feels addressed much less particularly, urgently or uniquely. Whilst both versions ensure that the reader is prepared to interpret Daniel and Jesus’ words in the light of anticipated persecution, it seems reasonable to conclude that Matthew offers clarification of Mark’s text to reduce diegetic confusion and to eliminate ambiguity. It seems much more probable to posit that Matthew sought to decontaminate the literary framework of the Markan text he received than that Mark sought to muddle Matthew’s more simplistic framework. It is appropriate to suggest that Matthew does everything possible to reduce the contamination of Mark’s narrative framework but virtually impossible to imagine a context in which Mark would want to obfuscate Matthew’s text.

Clarification in Luke

> But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people... Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:20-28)

The hypothesis that Matthew sought to decontaminate the extra-diegetic intrusion of the narrator in Mark 13 is supported by careful reading of Luke's version of the pericope. Where Mark is obscure, and Matthew slightly clearer as to the role of the reader as a discerning disciple, Luke eliminates confusion altogether by discarding entirely the reference to the reader. Luke offers fewer hints as to the nature of a potential 'desolation' but offers more clarity as to what sign will precede this disaster. He reframes the desolation without any reference to the Danielic 'abomination' and suggests unambiguously that it is the encircling of armies around Jerusalem that indicates the imminence of the eschaton.

This re-contextualisation of Jesus' exhortation has the effect of reducing the depth of knowledge of Old Testament prophecy required for a reader to feel like a discerning disciple and replacing it instead with a good grasp of current affairs or military action. Luke's warning is engaging for a Gentile reader with little grasp of the historical significance of the earlier 'abomination' of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Appropriate discipleship no longer requires knowledge of Daniel alluded to in Matthew. Furthermore, Luke has restored an emphasis on contemporaneous awareness which matches Mark's "Let the reader understand" much more deeply if the Markan parenthesis is an appeal to the reader of the Gospel rather than the reader of Daniel. If Mark intended his readers to discern the abomination as the dawning of the eschaton then Luke fulfils this reading and makes it clearer for non-Jewish readers. However, if the evangelist had Matthew's reading in mind Luke has entirely missed the point.

Matthew and Luke with their very different priorities may be seen as representing divergent readings of Mark. This suggestion in itself represents not only a controversial conclusion about the primacy of Mark but also an indication of how

anomalous the parenthesis of Mark 13:14 is. Its interpretation in the subsequent synoptic accounts is almost as divergent as is imaginable: precisely the effect that might be imagined from a confusing transgression of diegetic norms.

Matthew and Luke then should be interpreted as those who have read Mark's appeal as an appeal to themselves. Matthew recognises himself as a reader of Mark and choses to highlight the significance of Daniel's words, cryptically alluded to in Mark, but of profound significance to his own Jewish audience. Luke recognises himself as a reader of Mark and focuses on surrounding armies as a sign of imminent disaster, believing this to fulfil Mark's warning without needing a Danielic retrospective. They both feel fully authorised to edit and to clarify the understanding that they have been asked to develop. Their reception and adjustment of the Markan parenthesis demonstrates precisely the shrewd interpretation required by Mark.

2.5 Summary

The parenthesis of 13:14 is anomalous to the extent that (a) it refers to the reader or listener whilst none of Mark's other parentheses do, (b) all of Jesus' other references to the reader or listener are addressed to second person (e.g. "have you not heard"), whereas 13:14 appeals to the third person, and (c) it interrupts Jesus' speech to urge a particular depth of understanding. Nevertheless, these abnormalities are not, per se, proof that the parenthesis is a metaleptic contortion of the role of the narrator and of the primary character. As a narrative strategy the use of a third-person imperative necessarily encourages the reader or listener of Jesus' exhortations and discourse to apply instruction to him/herself. R. Fowler notes plausibly that this is a rhetorical strategy that, "a good teacher like Jesus might use to express a general truth that would include his intimate followers but also could extend beyond that circle to

others."[52] It remains possible that the direct appeal for discernment speaks "to both the intra-narrative [and extra-narrative] audience."[53]

I would nevertheless argue that the primary effect of the parenthesis is upon the extra-diegetic reader and its presence does achieve a distinct narrative interruption or 'frame-breaking.'[54] Crucially, quite apart from the diversity of meaning and setting, comparison between other references to readership and that found in 13:14 are broadly irrelevant, because in 13:14 the narrative effect is entirely different. Given the urgency of the surrounding chapter and the prophecies contained therein it is hard to read the parenthesis as anything other than an urgent appeal to the Gospel reader. The reader of Mark is not personally engaged by the question, "Have you not read?" found in 2:25, 12:10 and 12:26. The apologetic vindication of Jesus' actions broadcast through these passages has, in each case, an explicit 'target audience' within the primary diegesis. However, in the urgent eschatology of chapter 13, the ambiguity of the appeal to the third person, and the lack of an obvious audience to whom Jesus would address this appeal means that the parenthesis "Let the reader understand" inevitably includes the reader within the interpretative community of those who hear Jesus' words. Mark's Gospel establishes a clear paradigm of meta-diegetic intrusions into the primary diegetic layer and interruptions in the interactions of the characters who inhabit that universe, but the parenthesis of 13:14 uniquely and unambiguously turns attention toward the extra-diegetic reader of the Gospel. This achieves a genuine diegetic disturbance. The depth of this metaleptic effect is vividly attested to in the adjustments made in Matthew's and

[52] Perkins, *Let the Reader Understand,* p.101-2.
[53] Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand,* p. 83.
[54] This does not mean that it is simply Mark's own clumsy attempt to validate his intertextual re-designation of Daniel's "abomination of desecration." It may have been included as a deliberate trans-diegetic appeal placed on the lips of the protagonist, but it is more likely that it is an intentional change of focus to place accent on the urgency of understanding this passage and to unambiguously include the reader within the interpretative community of the Gospel.

Luke's accounts of the same discourse which seek to reduce the diegetic contamination and clarify the distinction between the signs of the eschaton and the reading of prophecy.

The parenthesis of Mark 13:14 is not the only overt interruption in Mark's Gospel, nor is it the only parenthesis. However, it is unique in its address toward the audience and its function as an apostrophe that increases readers' self-awareness of their own role in the reception of Jesus' teaching. The appeal to the reader is unmistakably undertaken in the voice of the narrator and in this sense the excursus is absolutely anomalous because it represents a movement across diegetic thresholds that contaminate the framework around Jesus' speech. This moment of metalepsis precipitated attempts in Matthew and Luke to reduce the difficulty of the interruption and their endeavours illustrate the depth of confusion around the demands of the self-involving parenthesis.

Mark interrupted Jesus to ensure that his own audience would not miss the personal relevance of Jesus' eschatological challenge: an intervention that speaks volumes about the permeability of narrative thresholds and about Mark's presumption that Jesus' words carry permanent omni-diegetic significance.

3. Hermeneutical Implications

3.1 In light of resurrection

Mark's Gospel is grounded in the experience of Jesus' empty tomb and rooted in the faith that this moment is the epicentre of history.[55] In a sense the apostrophe of 13:14 is uniquely significant with regards to the claim that all of time is relative to the resurrection, for it is the only moment in the Gospel which overtly locates the reader's existence within the same temporal continuum as that of Jesus' audience and disciples. Though the inclusion of the reader in 13:14 is unique as a direct appeal to the audience, it demonstrates the sense purveyed throughout the narrative that the reader is part of a temporal reality that Mark describes as the "Kingdom of God." Naturally therefore, the discerning reader of Mark may feel consistently invited toward a sense of privileged inclusion within the community of those who "have ears to hear" (Mark 1:15 and 4:9). The messianic secret motif and the voyeuristic vantage point afforded in incidents such as the transfiguration reinforce the feeling that the reader is a privileged audience member. This stance is nowhere more manifest than in the invitation of 13:14. Here the presence of the apostrophe reveals that the narration is not a hermetically distinct from its reception, rather it becomes obvious that there are readers whom Mark has expected to engage and who are invited to hear Jesus' words directly.[56] There is some value in Vincent Taylor's comments that

[55] Cf. Raymond Edward Brown, *The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).
[56] Matthew 27:52-53 as also been examined as an apocalyptic apostrophe. Cf. K.L. Waters, 'Matthew 27:52-53 as Apocalyptic Apostrophe: Temporal-Spatial Collapse in the Gospel of Matthew', *Journal of Biblical Literature 122*, no. 3 (2003), pp. 489-515.

"the parenthesis reads… like a dark hint, a clue to Christian eyes but an enigma to others."[57]

The parenthesis thus reinforces the sense of privileged knowledge Mark has already developed by binding narrator and reader into continuous community and obliging confluence of worldview (as with Auerbach's model of the New Testament). This is inevitable, for the apostrophe infers that Jesus' words to his disciples also apply with equal relevance to future readers. The apostrophe on its own validates entirely what Hans Frei suggested when he claimed that the gospel's propositional content could not be separated from its literary form.[58] For the appeal to the reader achieves an experience of ontological convergence, suggesting as it interrupts Jesus' words, that the reader's own existence and that of the characters within the narrative are located within a shared concatenation. The interruption shows that the Gospel is found in reading, in listening, in receipt, acceptance and application - for the content and shape of the narrative are genuinely inseparable and are both inextricably aimed toward appropriate reception and response.[59] Mark's text therefore leaves no question that the Jesus of the narrative is central to reality far beyond the spatiotemporal parameters of his primary diegesis, and even across the span of human history. Somehow the framework around the diegesis has stretched itself to accommodate even the reader within its continuum and Mark's appeal to the reader invites all those who come after to "absorb their own life into its world."[60]

[57] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark (2nd ed.)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), p. 511.
[58] Cf. Gary Comstock, 'Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on biblical narrative', *The Journal of Religion* 66, no. 2 (1986), pp. 117-140.
[59] Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013).
[60] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 119.

The Markan gospel is written under the conviction that Jesus' resurrection renders all he said and did valid, significant and interpretable in the future, a future that is itself determined by the emptiness of the tomb. "Let the reader understand" therefore functions as a promise of the significance of the resurrection in perpetuity, for the narrator of the Gospel, in light of the empty tomb, feels able to speak with certainty regarding that which is to come. The future reader will inevitably find herself in the midst of threatening and fearful eschaton, but this is itself to be interpreted in the light of what was an equally threatening and fearful passion. Indeed such is the meaningfulness of the Christ revealed in the Gospel, that the Markan narrator finds himself unable to wait until the end of the story to explain the things of greatest significance. Somehow, in the light of the empty tomb Mark knows that Jesus' words are pregnant with promise, with meaning and with a significance which cannot be contained within a single diegetic continuum or limited temporality. He therefore intervenes in the development of the discourse because he narrates under obligation to help the reader understand how to proceed in a post-resurrection world. He invites the reader to surrender the horizon of their hermeneutic to the new truth outworked at the end of the Gospel and to let their own interpretative sphere be shaped by the dimensions of the story. Those who already know that the outcome of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem must understand Chapter 13 as more than a warning of tribulation: it is also an invitation to courage, to composure and to a confidence that even the trials of the eschaton, in the light of the resurrection, must give way to the new and the eternal. Mark's intervention, read in resurrection faith, repeats a theological truth that is asserted consistently throughout the canon:

> Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

3.2 Self-involvement

"Let the reader understand" is consistently recognised as an exigent imperative highlighting the significance of the eschatology revealed in the chapter. Though the apostrophe is addressed on the same horizontal plane as the inter-diegetic characters, the inclusion of an implied reader transgresses the boundaries that normally maintain the integrity of the story and it prevents the reader from remaining immersed within the story world. The presence of the "reader" shatters the illusion that the reader is herself a witness of the events in the story world. Any simplistic or voyeuristic sense of an external 'spectator role' is prohibited by the diegetic deflation that occurs when Jesus' dialogue is interrupted. The primary diegesis is punctured and its cogency as a distinct world is suddenly challenged. Whilst intuitively the parenthesis seems to include the reader within the world of Peter, James, Andrew and John as a privileged disciple, this effect is patently not all that the phrase achieves, for the interruption also makes the reader aware that she is a reader and not an external observer. The collapse of diegetic distance achieves a similar effect as Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (as discussed in chapter one above) which prevents an audience from losing itself completely within the framework of the narrative, inviting a self-consciousness of the readerly role instead.[61] Indeed, the effects of the parenthesis are exactly as described by Jerome Walsh: demanding provocative and reflective self-involvement whilst also foregrounding the narrator and creating a distance between the reader and the primary diegesis.

> Breaking frame establishes a link between past events and the narratee's present adding new dimensions of concrete realism and personal relevance to the narratee… [whilst also] distancing the narratee from the

[61] Benton, *Studies in the Spectator Role*, pp. 28-38. Cf. Michael Benton, 'The self-conscious spectator', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35, no. 4 (1995), pp. 361-374.

> narrative…affording the narratee (and the reader) leisure to undertake reflection and distance to make the judgments that the narrator is urging. [62]

Walsh's summary is useful in that it connects the changed narrative stance with the effect upon the reader. His emphasis upon reflectiveness and distanciation highlights the self-involvement required of the reader and the manner in which a narrator's intervention in the text can confound the normal stability between the time frame that surrounds the story world and the reader's own world. The parenthesis of 13:14 reminds readers that an immediate discernment is required of them in their own space-time continuum, an appropriate purpose given the urgency of Mark's eschatological subject matter. This accent of urgency may primarily promote a discernment regarding the significance of Jesus' words, but it also succeeds in provoking self-awareness in the reader of her own interpretative parameters and theological priorities. The reader is invited to 'understand' firstly, how urgently the Gospel and the words and warnings of Christ apply to her own situation and secondly that she is indeed a reader, called in her own continuum to follow Jesus faithfully. The parenthesis challenges readers to return to their own world from the Mount of Olives and from their immersion in the inter-diegetic characters' world. It effects an awareness that the Gospel's meaning is not to be found only in its theological content but even more so in the interpretative event, for the good news is about what happens in the life of the reader as much as, if not more than, it is about what happens in the life of the text. This process of finding oneself in the text muddles the boundaries between 'reality' and 'representation', interfering with the delivery or execution of the text, whilst at the same time achieving a profound depth of conversation between a narrative discourse and its reception.[63] The interruption

[62] Walsh, *Old Testament narrative,* p. 100.
[63] Kacandes, *Narrative Apostrophe*, p. 341.

contributes to this strategy by defamiliarising and distancing and making the reader aware that they are indeed a *reader* and not a spectator perched at the edge of the primary diegesis. I therefore agree with Fowler that "The text does not so much convey some cargo of information as remind the reader that the process of reading is a temporal experience."[64] In this way Mark (perhaps even more than Matthew, Luke or John) "intentionally avoids clarity and so teaches readers to shoulder responsibility for their responses to Jesus' story."[65] The transgression of diegetic layers is a significant component of this process.

Mark intends the reading of his Gospel to solicit appropriate response and action, and the metaleptic effect of the parenthesis contributes to this end through foregrounding the narrative textures and roles of the narrator and narratee. This accentuates the urgency of shrewd readership and highlights the significance of the reader. Mark implies a highly self-involved model of readership and demands that readers are aware that they themselves are addressed from within the world of the text. Urgent discernment is required in the extra-diegetic world of the reader more than even the inter-diegetic world of Jesus, Peter, James, Andrew and John, for it is the post-resurrection reader who must face the eschaton and consequent trials.

Where fictional narratives depend upon the immersion of the reader within the inter-diegetic universe of the characters, Mark's Gospel depends absolutely on a sense of continuity between the inter-diegetic and extra-diegetic layers of the narrative and yet demands that the reader does not remain immersed in the story world: a faithful reading of Mark demands a paradoxical self-involvement wherein the

[64] Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, p. 221. Cf. Robert M. Fowler, 'Reader-response criticism: Figuring Mark's reader', in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* ed. by Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), pp. 50-83. (p. 65).
[65] Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and fishes: The function of the feeding stories in the Gospel of Mark* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), p. 82.

reader knows herself to be both included within the scope of the kerygma and yet also alive to the interpretative distance created by the new paradigm of her own context. Perhaps it is only the reader who accepts the invitation to break the frame of the narrative who can find the generative potential and the significance of the text's provocation in their own life, as Rowan Williams has claimed:

> Revelation is essentially to do with what is generative in our experience – events or transactions in our language that break existing frames of reference and initiate new possibilities of life… Revelation decisively advances or extends debate, extends rather than limits the range of ambiguity and conflict in language. It poses fresh questions rather than answering old ones… Thus 'revelation' is a concept which emerges from a questioning attention to our present life in the light of a particular past – a past seen as 'generative'.[66]

3.3 Omni-diegetic coherence

Whilst the reader's existence is never elsewhere acknowledged by characters in the primary or hypo-diegetic levels, the apostrophe of Mark 13:14 locates the reader on the same plane as Jesus' disciples – for the reading community and the disciples all hear Jesus' warnings and the narrators intervention prevents the reader from imagining that the warnings only apply to the disciples. This achieves an experience of ontological convergence, so that the readers' own existence and that of the characters within the narrative seem to be located within a shared continuum. In the context of Mark 13:14 the apostrophe, when read, punctures Jesus' speaking not just with the extra-diegetic intrusion but also with the presence of the reader who cannot read "Let the reader be aware" without also hearing themselves being addressed.

Whilst Matthew and Luke diverge in their re-presentation of the warning of Mark 13:14 they both recognised the warning as axiomatic to the engagement of the

[66] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 134.

reader – and applied the warning differently according to the needs of their readers. Mark's text has inherent ambiguity and the incongruous nature of the parenthesis may have a greater effect than either Matthew or Luke's more precise exhortations. In a simple sense the diegetic indeterminacy found in Mark 13:14 is not incidental to the structure of the story, it is quite possibly axiomatic to the narrative, for the explicit acknowledgement of the existence of the reader provides a cohesive framework for engagement with readers and audiences.

The paradox of the narrative intrusion is that on one level it demands that the reader distinguishes their own world from that of the story-world, successfully "deautomatizing perception" and preventing any sense of immersion in the aesthetic representation of the text.[67] Yet at the same time on another level the appeal for understanding presupposes that the urgency of Jesus' words is as relevant to the reader as it was to Jesus' audience. Here then is evidence that within the Bible itself is an invitation toward precisely the contemporaneity that Kierkegaard spoke of, for Mark demands that Jesus' words to his disciples are heard and actively interpreted by every subsequent generation of readers. The parenthesis is unambiguous that it addresses readers in their own 'now', and that this moment is defined by, and situated in relation to, the kerygma of the Christ. There is inevitably debate about whether Mark had a particular presumed reader, or a community in mind when he wrote, and whilst the inclusion of the reader in parenthesis in chapter 13 does not resolve this question it does demonstrate that the gospel was written to be read (rather than being heard through the readership of a lector) and that Mark anticipated Jesus' words operating with profound relevance beyond the thresholds of the story world. To read Mark's Gospel without allowing a sense of contemporaneous

[67] D.S. Miall and D. Kuiken, 'Foregrounding, defamiliarization, and affect: Response to literary stories', *Poetics 22*, no. 5 (1994), pp. 389-407.

relevance in Jesus' words is therefore to enjoy the aesthetic realism of Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* without comprehending any French, or to crop the frame from Borrell del Caso's *Escaping Criticism* so as to enjoy the depiction more fully.

Whilst historical and/or geographical dissonance may lead modern or critical readers to feel more alienated from Jesus' words than readers or hearers in the first century church, they cannot ignore the claim placed upon them by the narrative, particularly through the parenthesis that suggests that distance and time do not diminish the need for urgent understanding. Even though there is necessarily a sense of counterpoint between the first-century and the twenty first-century exegete, the text continues to provoke a sense of omni-diegetic coherence, whereby the worlds of the audience in the primary diegesis (Peter, Andrew, James and John) and the worlds of the extra-diegetic audience are bound together through the transcendent significance of Jesus' words.

Chapter Four:

“Oh that my words were written!”

1. Introduction

1.1 'Oh that my words were written!'

> Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!
> (Job 19:21-27)

Job's impassioned declaration, that he longs for his words to be recorded, is situated near the end of his response to his friend, Bildad. In exasperation at continued persecution by his friends, Job makes parallel assertions in this passage that a written record or a kinsman-redeemer will eventually vindicate him. The expression of yearning for a written demonstration of innocence, bracketed as it is by Job's preceding torrent of frustration and his subsequent appeal for a vindicator, therefore feels like a very coherent conclusion to the rest of his response to Bildad in 19:1-27, for he is crying out in exasperation: since his friends clearly won't exonerate him, surely posterity or a redeemer will? Throughout this response Job explores his sense of sequestration ("those whom I loved have turned against me" 19:19) and eventually, finding no justification for his suffering in the words of his friend, nor any sense that God is being fair to him, Job cries out in frustration, "Why do you, like God, persecute me?" This question, and its partner in the next hemistich, "Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?" (19:22), build on the growing isolation that Job reflects throughout 19:13-19. He says,

> He has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me. My kinsfolk and my close friends have failed me; the guests in my house have forgotten me; my maidservants count me as a stranger; I have become an alien in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he

> gives me no answer; I must beseech him with my mouth. I am repulsive to my wife, loathsome to the sons of my own mother. Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me (19:13-19).

Because of the sense of isolation and despair Job expresses, his desire for a record of his innocence and his desperate vision of a future redeemer feel perfectly understandable to the reader. They are derived from the deep personal anguish expressed so clearly in the preceding verses. As none of his current relationships provide a circumstance in which he could be vindicated he comes to the inevitable conclusion that his only hope for vindication is through the future action of a redeemer or through written record preserved in perpetuity. He suggests that his hope can only be realised through the dispassionate witness of written testimony or in the compassionate intervention of a benevolent kinsman-redeemer.[1]

In this passage Job does not address God (who is spoken of in the third person) and, save the brief rhetorical questions of 19:22 ("Why do you pursue me as God does?"), he does not specifically address his friends. Thus the passage has a sense of soliloquy about it. In these verses Job manages at the same time to reassert his sense that his friends should be more sympathetic; to establish the basis of his claim against God ("evidence to be used in his coming 'legal action'"); and somehow through iteration to remind himself of his own grounds for hope, namely that he will one day be vindicated. In some ways these verses function together as a list of possibilities which together offer Job tangible grounds for hope.[2]

[1] Norman Habel suggests that the book of Job is structured so as to contrast God's "celestial verdict declaring Job in the right" with "the earthly verdict of Elihu finding Job in the wrong." Norman C. Habel, 'The Role of Elihu in the Design of the Book of Job', in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays of Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. by W. Boyd Barrick, John R. Spencer, and Gösta Werner Ahlström (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 83 – 98 (p. 87).
[2] Norman Whybray, *Job (Readings, a New Biblical Commentary)* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2008), p.98.

Aside from the structural and sequential context a number of lexical observations are also noteworthy. The opening expression of verse 23, “Oh that…” (*mi-yitten)* is a recurring formula in Job which marks “momentous flights of hope” and therefore demonstrates a significant degree of continuity with the rest of the book of Job.[3] Five other uses match hyperbole and desperation in a similar manner to the sentiments expressed in 19:23-24:

> Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant my desire; that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! (6:8-9)
>
> Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom! (13:5)
>
> Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until thy wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! (14:13)
>
> Oh, that I knew where I might find [God], that I might come even to his seat! 23:3-4
>
> Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! (31:35)[4]

Job’s expressed desire for written testimony is consistent structurally and linguistically with the other utterances of deepest desire found throughout the book. Equally, the meter of the passage matches a rhythm that occurs numerous times in the book. The most common meter is a hemistich of two sets of three syllables, though the next most common patterns are longer units of 4 & 4 or 4 & 3.[5] 19:23a and 19:24a are examples of a third long meter 3+4 syllable unit, and there are twenty two occasions when this pattern emerges, often two or three times in quick

[3] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1985), p. 303.
[4] The phrase is also found on the lips of Zophar in 11:5, “But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee.”
[5] W.B. Stevenson, *The poetry of Job: a literary study with a new translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 57. He adds, “though shorter ones than normal are conspicuous by their rarity” (*Loc. cit.*).

succession.[6] The complaints of some scholars such as C.J. Ball that the "Masoretic text is too long for the metre in 23a" are therefore unwarranted given the frequency of this asymmetrical pattern.[7] Therefore translations which afford particular attention to the meter may merit more consideration than those which assert amendments. Of note are the efforts of W.B Stevenson, D. Wolfers and R. Alter, whose translations all achieve a lively sense of rhythm:

> I would that my words were written,
> with a pen of iron on lead.
> I would they were traced in a book,
> or forever engraved on a rock.[8]

> I would that my words were written,
> that they were inscribed in an archive.
> With iron pen on lead,
> Carved in the rock forever.[9]

> Would, then, that my words were written,
> that they were inscribed in a book,
> with an iron pen and lead,
> to be hewn in rock forever.[10]

Each of these translations manages a sense of symmetry and syntax that reflects the alteration, assonance and rhythm of the Hebrew. Given that meaning and a literal faithfulness to the original text are achievable this should be seen as a strong indication that reconstructions of an alternative text are unnecessary.

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[6] Further exploration of this pattern is undertaken by Tur-Sinai who compares the destruction of compound parts of a sentence across rhythm stichoi in this text with a similar pattern found in Psalm 29:8. Naphtali Herz Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: a new commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1967), p. 203.

[7] C.J. Ball, *The Book of Job a revised text and version* (London: Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 275.

[8] William Barron Stevenson, *The poem of Job: a literary study with a new translation* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1980), p. 49.

[9] David Wolfers, *Deep things out of darkness: the book of Job: essays and a new English translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 487.

[10] Robert Alter, *The wisdom books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: a translation with commentary*, (New York: WW Norton, 2011), p. 83.

1.2 Hypothesis

Job's plea that his case might be recorded for posterity in an enduring written testimony works on two different levels. On the surface this plea is a hyperbolic expression of Job's confidence in his own innocence or YHWH's righteousness. However, at another level it is a piece of narratological humour, in which the poet delights in the irony of his own craft. Job's complaints in the preceding verses lead very naturally to a desire for a written record, and there is nothing incongruous about his appeal for indelible vindication. Whilst the appeal for enduring testimony found in 19:23 lacks some of the characteristics that might be expected of a statement of narratological self-involvement, this is nevertheless an entirely appropriate lens through which to interpret the verse. It is virtually impossible to construe a context in which the author could have written about Job's desire for written record without at the same time alerting readers to the fact that, in his own role as story-teller, he was creating precisely such a testimony. This suggests that the author considered it appropriate to enfold his own *sitz im leben*, humour and uncertainty within the paradigm of theological revelation. The verse reveals that the telling of the tale is a source of satisfaction and amusement for its writer, and as a consequence 19:23 is particularly significant in understanding the text, for the irony of the verse reveals that the author intends to be outlived by his text and is delighted at the prospect. In a sense in this verse, in the middle of profound theological confession, both Job and our writer are both equally the subjects of the joke. Job is shown to be entirely ignorant that his words *are* being written down and that he is a character in a story whilst the writer creates a legacy that, to be fulfilled, must outlive him (because for Job's request to be fulfilled he cannot live to see the success of his artistry even though he creates a permanent record). "If only my words could be written down" is

thus a profound commentary on the historical remoteness of Job, the finitude of the poet and the reader's similar confinement within an inexorable chronology and dependence on the providence of God.

Significantly, the phrase, "if only my words could be written down" evokes at the same time a chorus of affirmation that Job's words have indeed been written ("They are written down Job!") and, *de facto,* an awareness in the audience that they are reading or hearing them. There is in fact no humour at all in Job's plea unless the audience responds with a privileged sense of awareness, rather like a pantomime audience might repeat the refrain, "He's behind you!" Furthermore, this amused perspective is only possible if the audience is distant in time from the expression of desire for a permanent memorial, as it is precisely the audience's separation from the narrator's voice that achieves ironic realisation that Job's plea has been fulfilled. The joke can only work in the presence of self-involved audience who are aware that there is a gap between the events of the story and their own hearing of it, for it is this distance that creates the degree of permanent vindication for which Job is so desperate. Thus a depth of mirth and satisfaction is available for the self-involved audience who are conscious of their hermeneutical participation, for only these remote readers can know that Job's hopes have been more amply fulfilled than he could have imagined.

The poet's irony at this point is overlooked by every commentator with no references to the incidental amusement caused by the plea for written record, nor any observation of intentional humour. By contrast my contention is that the appeal for written vindication is fundamentally a self-referential joke. This hypothesis does not negate the place of verses 23-24 within Job's own voice: for the plea functions naturally as a part of Job's rhetoric and as a valid component of the response he

makes to the accusations of his friends. It is entirely to be expected, given Bildad's obstinacy, that Job would cry out for a written memorial through scroll, stele, stylus or carving. Nevertheless I suggest that in this act of self-referential humour the poet includes himself within the frame of the text, increasing the reader's awareness of the story-teller's art, perhaps in part rather like countless artists have done in their paintings including, for example, Velazquez, painting himself into the background of *The Maids of Honour*.[11]

My suggestion is that there is a great deal of significance in these verses which evidence the self-referential voice of an accomplished poet joking not only about the fact that Job deserves a written legacy but also about his own role in this endeavour. Situated as it is in such proximity to the famous appeal to a kinsman redeemer (verses 25-27), Job 19:23-24 is commonly overlooked. Commentators anticipate the more exciting promise of a redeemer in the subsequent verse and pay minimal attention to the humour of the poet revealed here. However, given that the reference to writing in this verse is inherently self-referential and the irony self-targeted, the narrator's inclusion of him/herself within the frame of the text as a subject of mirth may be of profound significance. Whilst the Joban poet expresses his own presence within the text only on this occasion, the nature of this self-involvement is unusually reflective. Though it reveals nothing of geography, theological provenance or cultural context, it does reveal that irony in the text is not ultimately or exclusively a theological tool and nor is YHWH the exclusive target of the author's jesting. The evidence of the narrator's self-referential humour within the primary diegesis suggests that he does not set out to subtly mock God, rather the entire book is

[11] Similar famous examples of self-referential art include Michelangelo's self-inclusion in his 1541 Sistine Chapel *The Last Judgement*; Goya's portrait of *Charles IV* and Jan van Eyck's depiction of *The Arnolfini wedding.*

grounded and situated within a framework of omni-directional irony which is applied not only to the main characters, but even to the narrator.

Consequently, close consideration of the nature of the written record alluded to in Job's plea, and the comic context of the book are significant in establishing these verses as a self-aware metaleptic joke. This hypothesis depends to varying degrees on three premises:

1. That complications in the received text are not so substantial as to discount the suggestion of a nuanced and subtle narratological joke about writing.
2. That Job's plea really is a request for a written record of some sort – an issue debated in some commentaries.
3. That it would not be unusual for the author of Job to employ subtle and self-effacing humour in this passage.

It is not my intention that these considerations should be taken as proof that Job 19:24 is a self-referential joke. Establishing the validity of the received text, examining what manner of writing is meant in this verse, and considering the style of the Joban narrator's humour do not provide sufficient grounds for a deductive conclusion to this end. However, cumulatively these arguments do, at the very least, legitimate the possibility that at one level, the verse functions as as a self-deprecating joke. I suggest these explorations cross a probability threshold, justify a renewed consideration of the poet's humour and invite consideration of range of hermeneutical implications. To this end I first proceed through analysis of arguments regarding the received text of 23-24, examination of vocabulary related to writing within Job and review of the range and scope of humour within the book before attending to hermeneutical implications at the end of the chapter.

2. Self-referential Humour

2.1 Controversial Interpretations

There are three areas of debate regarding the context of Job's cry for written testimony that require particular consideration: translation of the word *la'ád* (forever, 19:24b), alteration of the term *kathab* (to write,19:23) and the meaning of the chiastic parallelism of *ani* (myself, verses 23 and 27). These areas of contention are very limited and consequently there is generally a sense of consensus regarding the location of verses 23-24 within its surrounding textual context and the broad meaning of the pericope.

The translation of the word *la'ád* "for ever" in 19:24b was a common consideration in studies in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Theodotion and the Vulgate translated *la'ád* as "as a witness." This change became popular again in a number of modern translation following John Peter Lange's 1840 commentary.[12] This amendment needs only the pointing to be adjusted with a *sheva'* and a *tsere*, but with David Clines I consider this 'arbitrary.' [13] Conveying, as it does, precisely the permanence that might be desired of a written record, there is no good reason to reject translation of *la'ád* as "for ever." Furthermore there is strong attestation for this translation in the parallel passage in Isaiah 30:8 because *la'ád* only makes sense if translated "forever." F. Delitzsch has persuasively argued that, "one should follow the MT here in reading *la'ád* since in the present form of the text the three definitions of

[12] Philip Schaff (ed.), *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture – an exegetical and doctrinal commentary, Volume 3: Job to Ecclesiastes*, *translated by Rev. Dunlop Moore and Rev. Samuel T. Lowrie* (Harrington, Delaware: Delmarva Publications, 2014), p. 65.
[13] David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20. Word Biblical Commentary 17* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), p. 433. Clines notes that Micah 1:2 and Micah 7:18 have two different meanings for *l'd*, just as Job seems to in 16:8 and 19:24. See also Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* Vol. 1, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1967), p. 282.

time form a climax: for the future, for the farthest future, for the unending future."[14] Given the overt parallelism between Isaiah 30:8 and Job 19:24 it is therefore illogical to posit a different meaning for the same word.

The second question regarding textual inaccuracy relates to a suggested alteration of *kathab* (to write or engrave) in 23a because of the repetition in 24 of the act of engraving (this time *chatsab*). Bernhard Duhn argued that the different words couldn't possibly both be presumed to mean engrave.[15] Kurt Galling and Clines (amongst others) have, however, refuted this idea suggesting the repetition contains an obvious and intentional hyperbaton (reversal of anticipated word order) so that "the extremely elegant arrangements of the words, [allows] *bsphr* to stand, per hyperbaton, emphatically prominent."[16]

Finally, David Wolfers has suggested that the duplication of *ani* (myself) in verses 25- 27 implies that the desire for a redeemer expressed in verses 25-27 stands in emphatic contrast to the earthly hope considered in 23-24, and that the first *ani* in 19:25 ("but I know") therefore demonstrates a rejection of written testimony as a form of vindication. According to Wolfers this is because passages in Job which duplicate *ani* "always place Job in contrast to the view of another."[17] Wolfers therefore suggests:

[14] F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah II* (1890), p. 29.
[15] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1897).
[16] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p.432. Kurt Galling, 'Die Grabinschrift Hiobs', *Die Welt des Orients* 1 (1954), pp. 3-6.
[17] Wolfers, *Deep things,* p. 382. Wolfers claims that such conflicts occur 20 times in Job "for the specific purpose of pointing a contrast between the speaker and another subject, usually the person being addressed. In v.7 there is an unmistakable use of this convention. The ani of this verse should therefore induce us to search of the context for a source of contrast to the speaker" (*Loc. cit.*). However, this "adversative continuation" is difficult to accept, as both the desire for a written record and the longing for the intervention of redeemer seem to be equally Job's.

> The *waw* of 25 does not imply any logical continuation (and), rather it seems to stand in adversative sense (but) – earthly wishes are vanity compared to the real hope of a redeemer.[18]

This hypothesis is tenuous, particularly as the cumulative effect of 23-27 expresses such a remarkably similar intent to the cry found in 16:18-19, “O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high.” Nevertheless it remains possible that the author is pointing out the limitations even of the written memorial he is writing by contrast to the benevolence of a redeemer: an accent of further irony.

Analysis of the meter, style, language and content of Job’s plea, “If only my words were written”, suggests it is a natural and coherent expression of his desire for eventual justification. Verses 23-24 represent an integral part of Job’s own speech and reveal significant artistry through parallelism of terms whose repetition create a sense of crescendo that is only diminished through attempts to correct or reconstruct the text.

2.2 Books, Scrolls and Stelae

The most common disagreement concerning to 19:23-24 relates to the meaning of *sepher* (book) in 23b. Whilst the majority of published translations interpret this as ‘scroll’ or ‘book’ there are reasons for questioning this, and as a consequence the extent to which the passage is referring to writing, rather than to the erection of a stela or monument has been the subject of some debate. A second uncertainty surrounds the use of *ophereth* (lead) in 24b. Modern understanding leaves commentators uncertain as to how lead and iron might be used together to make lasting marks in stone. This question is of significance, for translations which suggest that each of the four hemistichs alludes to chiselling a monument necessarily

[18] *Loc. cit.*

diminish the suggestion that the verses are part of a conscious self-referential joke. Whilst this possibility is not entirely negated, it is much harder to posit an intentional parallel between Job's plea and the scribal work of the author if these verses do not in fact imply that Job wished his words to be written down in the same manner as the author himself was writing. There may be some irony in Job wishing for his words to be chiselled on rock, but the irony is more overt and self-referential if his plea is for words written in a scroll.

Carving a book

Whilst *sepher* normally means scroll, script or scribe, its employment in 23b is puzzling as the verb *Haqaq* (in the same verse) normally means to chisel or engrave.[19] To many commentators it seems improbable that Job is referring to a book having letters cut into it and therefore a number suggest that *b'sphr* does not mean 'in a scroll', but is rather one of a number of foreign terms subsumed into Job's language. This argument was first articulated by Henry S. Gehman. He noted that the "original connotation of the root *sphr* was 'to cut'… accordingly *sepher* is juxtaposed with *haqaq* which in background is a synonym… to make sense of the words as they stand we render 'Oh that in an inscription they were inscribed!'"[20]

This suggestion has been widely received and adapted: A. Guillaume suggested "*B'sphr* is almost certainly Accadian as one does not cut letters in a book."[21] E. Dhorme, noting that *haqaq* is employed consistently to mean engrave but that the root *sepher* is of famously diverse meaning, suggested that "everything seems to suggest that we should recognise here, the Assyrian word *siparru* 'copper',

[19] David J.A. Clines (ed.), *The dictionary of classical Hebrew, Vol. 3* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 277.
[20] Henry S. Gehman, 'סֵפֶר, an Inscription, in the Book of Job', *Journal of Biblical Literature 67*, no. 3 (1944), pp. 303-307 (p. 306).
[21] Alfred Guillaume, *Studies in the Book of Job with a new translation ed. by John Macdonald* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 101.

'brass' which supposedly recurs in Isaiah 30:8 and Judges 5:14." [22] Following similar logic but coming to a different conclusion, Norman Habel suggested that *sepher* was in some languages originally the word for a stele rather than book and he also cited Isaiah 30:8 as justification of this translation.[23] Robert Gordis employed different logic but came to the same conclusion: "In view of Job's desire for ultimate vindication *b'sphr* must refer to durable material and can scarcely mean "book" or "scroll," particularly in view of the instruments mentioned in 24a."[24] Duhm found an entirely different way to reconcile the cutting with the book translating, "inscribed in his book" and suggested that the book in question may be the permanent record God keeps.[25]

Thus *b'sphr* has been variously presumed to mean copper, stele, inscription or divine record – but on account of its being the object of the verb 'to cut' it is now rarely translated to mean a parchment/ papyrus book or scroll. Nevertheless I think there are three good reasons to maintain a conventional interpretation. Firstly, in Job 31:35 *sepher* describes a book, in a context where, because Job promises to carry it on his shoulder, the word cannot have been referring to a stele, inscription or copper because each of these would have been too heavy, a fact missed in all the creative reconstructions I have reviewed. Here Job pleads:

[22] Dhorme, *A Commentary*, pp. 281-282.
[23] Habel, *The Book of Job,* p. 292. Thus Habel's translation is: "O if only my case were recorded! Oh if only it were inscribed on a stela, With iron stylus and lead, Carved on rock forever!" Marvin Pope makes a similar argument: "The Copper treasure scroll at Qumran may be a record for posterity of the kind that Job is interested referring to." Marvin H. Pope, *Job: A New Translation with introduction and commentary. The Anchor Bible, Vol. 7* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 143.
[24] Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: JTS Press, 1978), p. 202.
[25] Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*, p. 93.

> Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown (31:35).[26]

Whilst in this instance the *sepher* in question is the object of the more common verb *kathab* this occurrence nevertheless indicates that to the author of Job *sepher* could mean a book or scroll. Secondly, as Clines argues "in view of the poor attestation of the supposed *bsphr* "copper" in Hebrew it remains preferable to take the word as meaning "inscription" and therefore applying to a written record.[27] Finally, whilst it would be unusual to engrave words in a scroll it is not impossible at all that Job might 'wish' for such an inscription and that an emphatic cutting action, originally used to describe words being chiselled into monuments continued to be employed even after words were written in scrolls rather than carved in stele. In this instance *haqaq* might be taken to mean an emphatic and more permanent record than any mere *kathab* could provide and it is not therefore implausible to imagine Job longing for words to be cut into a scroll or for the narrator to offer precisely this unusual picture of an engraved scroll emphasising the extra permanency Job desires. [28]

Whilst there is some etymological ambiguity, the most frequent use of both 'inscription' and 'scroll' makes the best sense of 19:23-24. Additionally the verb *kathab* (to write) is employed on 227 occasions in the Hebrew Bible and consequently any reading which diverts from suggesting that verse 23 is alluding to a specific written form of Job's words is hard to justify.

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[26] Gary Staats suggests usefully that in 31:35 Job is alluding to his afore-stated wish for a written testimony. Gary Staats, *Commentary on Job* (Washington: Logos Bible Software, 2009), p. 76.
[27] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 432.
[28] A fourth point is made by Stevenson. He notes, "Yet words *have* been preserved in a book and would exceed the usual bounds of an inscription on a tablet of bronze." However, this argument seems less than valid as it presumes that the book of Job is precisely the testimony Job wanted, whereas he might have been satisfied with a simple recorded of his protestations, which might very well have fitted on a small tablet. Stevenson, *The poetry of Job,* p. 86.

Multiple inscriptions

The nature of the inscription in verses 23 does not substantially alter my notion that the author of Job was offering an ironic reflection on his own art. However, the impact of diverse suggestions regarding writing tools and materials is that there no consensus regarding the total number of 'writings' depicted in 23-24. Some suggest that Job is eager for three inscriptions: one in a book, one in iron and one on rock. Others suggest two: one of parchment and one in rock. A third suggestion is that Job appeals for one record, but hyperbolically alludes to all the techniques of literature that he can imagine. Whether what is imagined in these verses is actually one, two, three or four inscriptions does have some impact upon the thesis. I have mentioned above views which suggest there are two types of inscription (scroll and lead etched rock). This view is increasingly common. Prior to the growing acceptance of this view a number of commentators suggested a climactic progression from parchment to lead to rock, thus:

> O that my words were written
> Were engraved in parchment
> Or with an iron stylus on lead
> Or carved in rock for all times.[29]

This view credits the text with the most regular symmetry, a view which has much credit given the repetition of key words and the precise *parallelismus membrorum* (parallelism between poetic lines) identified by most translators between 25 and 26.[30]

Nevertheless, whilst the most common suggestions are that two types of writing are alluded to, Robert Gordis finds only one inscription. He notes that

[29] This model and a virtually identical translation is also adopted by Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Job: together with a new translation,* Vol. 1 (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1921), p. 170.
[30] Cf., Wolfers, *Deep things*, p. 486 ff.

Jeremiah 17:1 refers to two types of engraving on one type of material: “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars” (Jeremiah 17:1). Accordingly, therefore, he asserts that there is no need to posit a symmetrical relationship between the writing materials – in his view it is acceptable to imagine 23a and b both leading to the detailed description of verse 24. Gordis suggests Job is not asking for one or other type of writing, rather he is longing for the most permanent form possible – a carved stone. If this is the case it is possible that Job was merely alluding to his desire for a physical record of some description, rather than emphasising the significance of writing.[31]

Naphtali Herz Tur-Sinai has also offered an approach which diminishes the significance of the appeal for a written testimony was that of. He suggested that Job had no desire at all for a written record, but was rather considering four different types of record, those recorded in parchment, in iron, in lead and in rock. He suggests that Job merely considers written testimony as a device which may have occurred to the audience of the poem so as to reject it as useless and unwanted: IN his view it should be understood that Job is saying “Should I comfort myself saying: Oh that my words were written down for ever… No! this is poor comfort for me who will soon be no more.”[32]

Whilst I cannot agree with Tur-Sinai that Job’s desperate *mi-yitten* (“Oh – that…”) is actually a dismissal of the benefits of a written record, I can see no overwhelming reason for adopting any one of these models over the others. It seems

[31] His suggestion is that “in view of Job’s desire for ultimate vindication *bsphr* must refer to durable material and can scarcely mean “book” or “scroll,” particularly in view of the instruments mentioned in 24a.” Gordis, *The Book of Job*, p. 203.
[32] Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, p. 303.

that what is required is acknowledgment that the text contains at the same time a clear pattern of progressive repetition and a degree of ambiguity. In technical poetic terms verses 23-24 contain a number of significant figures of speech:

> The repetition in 23a and 24b of 'engrave' *kathab… chatsab* is an example of 'adnominatio' (repetition of a word but in a different form)
>
> "*Mi-yitten…mli mi-yitten"* (oh that they were… oh that my words…) in 23a+b is an example of 'Paromoiosis' (parallelism of sounds in words across adjacent clauses).
>
> The inclusion of several writing materials (*sepher, barzel, ophereth, tsur*) is evidence of 'expolitio' (repetition of the same idea, changing its words), 'palilogia' (repetition in order to increase a sense of fullness or communicate passion) and 'scesis onomaton' (a series of successive, synonymous expressions.)

The repetition and ambiguity of nomenclature together draw attention to both the talent of the author and the significance of Job's desire for vindication. The narrator says in fifteen words what he could have said in four and thereby highlights the value of his own writing as a sympathetic testimony toward Job.

Chocolate Teapots

A final question regarding the writing implied in verses 23-24 is less critical to my hypothesis, but still of significance. There is some uncertainty concerning the use of the lead and iron to mark on stone. The syntax leaves uncertainty as to how the lead, iron and stone are related to one another, so that there are significant divergences in modern translations:

> O that my words were written down! O that they were inscribed in a book! O that with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a rock for ever! (NRSV).
>
> Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! (NIV).
>
> I wish that my words could be written down or chiselled into rock (CEV).

There remain a number of competing suggestions as to what method was being considered. Whilst in theory a lead tool would be useless for chiselling an inscription into a rock, Dhorme has suggested that the text is actually alluding to "a known alloy of iron and lead, the lead serving the purpose of colouring matter to enable the engraver to mark out his letter before cutting into the stone."[33] He notes that iron and lead stand side by side as elements in an alloy mentioned in Ezekiel 22:20 ("They gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace") and thus concludes with the following translation:

> Oh that my words might be written down, Oh that they might be engraved on brass, That with a tool of iron and lead They should remain engraved in the rock forever.[34]

Conversely a number of translations have persisted with the idea that the text is referring to the use of an iron stylus punching letters into lead, like pen and paper.[35] William Brownlee in particular sought to emphasise the ancient practice of inscribing in lead for the sake of its permanence.[36] He cited the Roman practice of using lead tablets for supplication or curse, noting that these *tabellae devotionis* were dropped into sepulchres in appeal to the gods precisely because of their permanence. His argument therefore was that if Job is seeking a permanent testimony of his legal case this practice might be exactly the sort which would appeal to him.

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[33] Dhorme, *A Commentary*, p. 282.
[34] Ibid., p. 281.
[35] This idea derives from the Vulgate which translates, "with an iron pen and a sheet of lead."
[36] William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19. Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989) p. 90.

Nevertheless, the most common interpretation has been adopted from Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki, 1040-1105), who suggested that molten lead was run into the letters that had been chiselled in the stone. Robert Alter follows this view saying, "The lead initially puzzling, was explained by Rashi as the material used to darken the incised letters in order to make them more visible, and archaeology now offers some confirmation of this idea."[37] Whilst the archaeological evidence is not prolific the famous cuneiform inscription at Behistun seems to show this type of inscription with words above the head of Darius showing a residue of lead.[38]

The evidence of the Behistun inscription and the interpretation of Rashi suggests that iron, lead and rock may, at the very least be imagined in use together. On the balance of probability therefore, if the iron pen, lead and rock represent one form of written record, 'written and inscribed words that are inscribed in a scroll' may also function cumulatively and represent one method of writing. The best translation of the verses therefore remains one that encompasses a double structure regarding writing on a scroll and writing on a stone – such as that of the RSV:

> Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
> Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever!

2.3 Irony, Parody and Comedy

There is very little doubt that the book of Job contains a significant depth of comedy. Works by James Williams (1971), William Whedbee (1977), David Robertson (1977), Yair Hoffman (1983), Bruce Zuckerman (1998), Dick Geeraerts (2003) and Abigail Pelham (2010) have convincingly emphasised a number of different elements in the

[37] Alter, *The Wisdom Books*, p. 83.
[38] The definitive explanation of this tri-lingual monument to Darius is H.C. Rawlinson's study. H. C. Rawlinson, 'The Persian cuneiform inscription at Behistun, decyphered and translated; with a memoir on Persian cuneiform inscriptions in general, and on that of Behistun in Particular', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 10* (1848).

composition of Job that add humour to the narrative.[39] Whilst a wide range of humour is universally acknowledged there remains considerable debate about the balance, direction and purpose of the Joban author's irony. The depth, tenor and target of humour within the book is of fundamental significance to my approach to 19:23-24, for my claim rests on the idea that the author could legitimately be expected to make a joke about his own role within the reception of the story. To this end I make the following observations:

1. Humour is evident at every level of the text: in dialogue, structure and plot; in the words of Job, the narrator, his friends and God.
2. God, Job and Job's friends are all subjects of humour and it is not reasonable to suggest that Job alone, or God alone is the target of humour.
3. Given the background of the books as an exploration of natural suffering it is unsurprising that the most frequent comic images are related to nature and mortality.

Cumulatively these propositions make a probabilistic case for my reading of Job 19:23-24 as an example of self-effacing 'gallows humour' wherein the writer jokes about his own status and art.

Entrenched humour

Northrop Frye defined ancient comedy as a genre founded upon "a U-shaped plot, with the action sinking into deep and often potentially tragic complications, before

[39] James G. Williams, '"You have not spoken Truth of Me" Mystery and Irony in Job', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 83*, no. 2 (1971) pp. 231-255; William Whedbee, 'The comedy of Job', *Semeia 7*, no. 1 (1977), pp. 39 – 62; David Robertson, 'The Book of Job: A Literary Study', *Soundings 56,* no. 4 (1973), pp. 446-469; Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection: The book of Job in Context* (London: A&C Black, 1996); Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the silent: A study in historical counterpoint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Dirk Geeraerts, 'Caught in a web of irony: Job and his embarrassed God', in *Job 28: Cognition in Context*, ed. by Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 37-55 and Abigail Pelham, 'Job as Comedy, Revisited', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 35*, no. 1 (2010): pp. 89-112.

suddenly turning upward into a happy ending."[40] This is a description that William Whedbee suggests applies to the whole book of Job, in which Job's descent into confused despair eventually leads to a paradoxical confession (in which he learns how much he does not know) and an unexpected 'happy ending'. Whedbee suggests that the book is in the genre of a tragic-comedy:

> When the poem of Job is set in its full and final literary context, replete with Prologue and Epilogue as well as the Elihu speeches, the most apt generic designation of the book is comedy. In proposing a comic interpretation, I wish to… focus on that vision of comedy which has at least two central ingredients: (1) its perception of incongruity and irony; and (2) its basic plot line that leads ultimately to the happiness of the hero and his restoration to a harmonious society. When viewed from this perspective, Job emerges as "the great reservoir of comedy" (Christopher Fry). Thus we find such comic elements as caricature and parody in the depictions of Job's friends, young Elihu, God, and even Job himself. Moreover, the "happy ending" of Job, long a problem for interpreters, alters the tragic movement of the book and helps to confirm its comic side.[41]

Yair Hoffman goes further than Whedbee, suggesting that Job, more than any other biblical book, "is constructed on all levels upon a basis of irony" and that moreover, this irony is "at God's expense."[42] Irony is explained as 'dissimulation between what is presented and what is actually the case' and there is surely an abundance of dramatic and unexpected dissimulation developed at every level of the text. Hoffman suggests that the inadequacy of God's answers to Job constitute an indirect confession from the author and an ironic admission of failure:

> The author guides the reader towards a critical evaluation of the doctrines of retribution presented in the speeches of God, thereby advancing the ironic statement that even God himself is unable to provide a suitable answer.[43]

Hoffman is not alone in this synopsis: Katharine J. Dell for example has advocated a very similar position, claiming that the book of Job consistently misuses the form of

[40] Northrop Frye, 'Myth, Fiction, and Displacement', *Fables of Identity* 3 (1963), p. 21.
[41] Whedbee, 'The comedy of Job', p. 39.
[42] Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection*, p. 212.
[43] Ibid., p. 250.

'legal debate' to entirely diminish the validity of the argument against Job, so that whilst both YHWH and Job's friends present valid points, the structure of their arguments intentionally undermines them.[44]

This thesis is understandable, after all consistent presence of irony within the book is rarely contested. Nevertheless it is a compositional fallacy to suggest that the frequent use of irony necessarily defines the whole text as ironic: irony may be one of the author's tools without being his purpose. Indeed there is good evidence to suggest that humour is part of the internal hermeneutic of Job, but that far from being the purpose of the text, irony is embedded in the author's worldview just as artistry is embedded in his poetry and familiarity with other Hebrew scripture is embedded in his language. Humour is found at every level within the theodicy including within the structure of the plot, intertextual allusions, caricatured roles and regular ironic allusions. These need to be considered as part of a continuum of amused authorship rather than as the sole purpose of the text.[45] Hoffman and Dell's arguments that the text pokes fun at YHWH focuses too narrowly at the dialogue between Job and God, and misses the evidence of characterisation, intertext and plot structure which all indicate that humour is part of the underlying matrix of the book rather than a tool to undermine God.

The strongest evidence of the entrenchment of humour may be noted in the structural parodies which play on other biblical themes. These intertextual allusions

[44] Katharine J. Dell, *The book of Job as sceptical literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991).
[45] Cf. James Williams whose study highlights the comedy of the key characters: "But my use of the category of irony goes deeper than the history of Job interpretation. It stems from the concerns of the book itself. Classical Greek comedy characteristically posed a conflict (agon) between the alazon, the buffoon, the "imposter," and the eiron, the dissimulator, the balloon-pricker. The confrontation between these two characters stems from a conflict experienced between pretence and reality. The use of irony is the expression of an experience of extreme tension." Williams, '"You have not spoken Truth of Me"', p. 237.

are noted by a range of commentators.[46] In particular it is often noted that the wisdom genre is parodied in the words of Job's friends; Psalm 8 is parodied in Job 7:17-18; creation hymnody is parodied in 9:2-10 and the righteousness of the prophets is parodied in Job 9:28. These do not function primarily as a chance to mock preceding text or genre, and they are certainly not all ironic at the expense of YHWH. Instead they riff, play on prior structures and reveal a creative, humorous and iconoclastic hermeneutic. The following examples show how Joban intertext functions first and foremost as a humorous development of preceding texts, opening new doors to uncertainty rather than repeating the prior theological edifice.

What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? (Psalm 8:4)	What is man, that thou dost make so much of him, and that thou dost set thy mind upon him, dost visit him every morning, and test him every moment? (Job 7:17-18)
If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. (Jeremiah 20:9)	If I say, "I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad countenance, and be of good cheer," I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know thou wilt not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned. (Job 9:27-29)
Who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. (Psalm 104:24-33)	Who alone stretched out the heavens, and trampled the waves of the sea; who made the Bear and Orion, the Plei'ades and the chambers of the south; who does great things beyond understanding, and marvellous things without number… For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. (Job 9:8-18)

[46] Christian Frevel, 'Telling the secrets of Wisdom: The use of Psalm 104 in the book of Job', in *Reading Job Intertextually*, ed. by Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 157-58 (p 160); JiSeong James Kwon, *Scribal culture and intertextuality: literary and historical relationships between Job and Deutero-Isaiah*, (Vol. 85. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Choon Leong Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and commentary, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), p. 545.

In each of these examples the Joban hermeneutic sardonically inverts the building block of prior theological confidence offering a nuanced sense of a text that might otherwise stand in condemnation of Job. JiSeong James Kwong has argued in similar fashion that intertextual allusion to Deutero-Isaiah brackets key doxological phrases such as "He who alone stretched out the heavens" (which is found only in Isaiah 44:24 and Job 9:8) with "Job's despairing lament."[47] Consequently, the Joban text seems to share a depth of theological language whilst inviting honesty about the human experience. The history and inherited traditions of the prophets, the psalms and the Torah are thus included in Job's quest for vindication, for with only moderate filter they are teasingly opened to new possibility and question, with the notion that suffering is a punishment for the unrighteous exposed and, potentially, rehabilitated. It is an oversimplification to suggest that the re-interpretative process mocks prior text. Sometimes intertextual references in Job are of no ironic consequence (19:24 being a good example), sometimes intertext is employed for multiple conflicting aims (e.g. the lexical links between Psalm 104 and the speeches of Job, Elihu and YHWH), sometimes the intertextual re-affirms the prior text uncritically (e.g. Psalm 8) whilst sometimes, through a new context it subverts it (Jeremiah 20). These texts remain in dialogue with Joban theology, neither being consistently agreed with, nor being consistently ridiculed. They are involuntary dialogue partners in a poetic form of theological conversation which never quite climaxes into an elenchus or a refutation of prior theodicy or anthropology. The Joban poem is able to hold different theological positions together in tension, "disclosing the limitations of each but also the degree of truth present in them all."[48] As Carol Newsom has suggested,

[47] Kwon, *Scribal Culture*, p. 62.
[48] Ellen F. Davis, 'Job and Jacob: The integrity of Faith', in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible,* ed. by Danna Nolan Fewell (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992) p. 203

> In dialogue, rival perspectives concerning what is required of a person of piety…contest one another and enlist a network of implications and engagements. Read as a polyphonic work, the purpose of the book of Job is not to advance a particular view… Rather, its purpose is to demonstrate that the idea of piety in all its contradictory complexity cannot in principle be fitted within the bounds of a single consciousness.[49]

Intertextuality then sometimes adds to the irony of the text, but this is certainly not always the case. The intertextual elements of the theodicy contain elements of parody, but they also add depth to the depiction of the divine, they form a theological backdrop to the argument explored by Job, and infer intertextual force upon the voices of God, Job and his friends. Every allusion helps to contextualise the Joban complaint within the prior theology of wisdom, creation, faithful prophecy, doxology and divine proclamation. Just as it is mono-dimensional to claim that intertextuality in Job is intended to mock prior traditions it is also a caricature of the narrator's humour to claim that God is the sole target of parody. Humour is found at every level of the construction of the book as a lens through which the motif of the righteous sufferer can be explored with honesty.

Indiscriminate subjection

David Robertson, Abigail Pelham and Dick Geeraerts, along with Hoffman and Dell (above), have separately suggested that the focus of the irony, satire and parody in Job is fundamentally aimed at God. Robertson claims that irony functions primarily as "a joke at YHWH's expense", Pelham contends that the humour of the tale achieves "an ironic anti-climax that may oblige actually God to appear", and Geeraerts argues:

[49] Carol A. Newsom, 'The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 26*, no. 3 (2002), pp. 87 – 108 (p. 107). CF. Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Context of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

> If we contrast the common expectation of an omnipotent God with the image drawn in the Book of Job - the image, that is, of an all too human, fumbling, embarrassed God - then the text has an overall ironic meaning. [50]

The conclusion of these arguments is that the humour in the book combines to undermine the case against Job and consequently to diminish the reader's sense that God can be definitively described as just. Pelham says that the book of Job ultimately leaves us "waiting for the comedy of life to be invested with meaning, to be made tragic."[51] Robertson goes further still, suggesting that:

> The irony in Job is all pervasive, encompassing the entire book in its arms, so that, for example, YHWH's speeches are a joke on him, Job's replies tongue-in-cheek, and the ending ludicrous… Even Job's repentance is "tongue-in-cheek:" the hero bows his head but with a sidelong glance to his audience he winks his eye. [52]

Katharine Dell contributes to this thesis, adding that whilst Job's friends seem (at least on the surface) to be frequently correct, the audience, having heard the prologue, knows that their 'wisdom' is actually ill-informed vanity. As Dell puts it, "misuse of forms highlights Job's friends' ignorance through reinterpreting their legal-ease sceptically/ironically."[53] Dell and Robertson both also assert that God's sarcasm is itself subversively ironic. They have separately argued that because God's style of response is so similar to Job's it seems at least possible that the author is reducing him to Job's level. God repeats Job verbatim ("I will not keep silent" 41:12) and speaks with the same indignation and hyperbole.[54] Consequently Robertson wonders if God's rhetoric is deliberately no more satisfying than Job's indignation. Further, Dell (and Whedbee) suggests that God speaks in the same voice as Job and that a significant portion of God's own defence depends on the

[50] Pelham, 'Job as Comedy, Revisited', p. 113 and Geeraerts, 'Caught in a web of irony', p. 54.
[51] Pelham, *Job as Comedy, Revisited*, p. 112.
[52] Robertson, 'The Book of Job: A Literary Study', p. 445.
[53] Dell, *The Book of Job as sceptical literature*, p. 19.
[54] For example Job 38-39, "Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me" (Job 38:3).

characteristics of two mythical beasts, which ultimately renders his heavy handed approach less satisfying than Job's own humour. This, they suggest, leads necessarily to the conclusion that God's sarcasm is ultimately penned as an expression of theological scepticism.[55]

I find these approaches unsatisfying. The depth of humour across the book of Job seems too indiscriminate to be explained as a subtly undermining ironic clue that reduces the theodicy to a criticism of the divine, and such a conclusion negates the complexity of the theological picture in the text. As James Williams concludes:

> At times, may I admit, I think that the whole thing is terribly funny. But irony is never really funny is it? For what kind of universe must Job now live in? A meaningless universe mismanaged by a chaotic, capricious, jealous Tyrant. But I confess that I have a problem with this reading of Job… It makes sense of the text and does not involve a tortuous moulding, yet I revolt against it.[56]

With Williams, Bruce Zuckerman searches for an explanation of the irony and humour within the text and concludes that the book of Job was written as a parody of the stereotypical righteous sufferer as well as a satirical critique of divine omnipotence. [57] This view is more reasonable, but even this may understate the range of humour in the text. My suggestion is that the humour in the book of Job is indiscriminate – with God, Job, his friends, the created order and even the narrator himself becoming the butt of one joke or another.

The following quotations illustrate the range of those within the text who are targeted subjects of the narrator's humour. This omni-directional humour is of

[55] Dell notes that in the counterpoint between his anthropic communication style and his ostensibly divine message, God mocks Job through imitation. Dell adds that God consistently points out Job's weakness and fragility, as though his only defence is an *ad hominem* argument. "Laughing at Job, making fun of him, using his predicament as a mechanism for entertainment… His barrage of rhetorical questions, his sarcastic jokes, and his self-aggrandizement are mechanisms for his sport with Job... Paradoxically, this dramatized persistence feeds his ability to critique Job's earlier legalistic framework while simultaneously highlighting his own less-than-perfect characterization." *The Book of Job as sceptical literature* (p. 43).
[56] Williams, *You have not spoken truth of me*, p. 247.
[57] Zuckerman, *Job the silent,* pp. 118-146, 224 and 247.

genuine significance, particularly as it diminishes the claim that the irony in Job is fundamentally focused on the divine.

Job himself is witheringly questioned by God, rendering some of his confidence grotesque. Here, sarcasm and rhetorical questioning invite a humorous vision of humanity and of manliness. The very notion of righteous indignation is hard to countenance when juxtaposed with an image of a man having to tuck his tunic between his legs to face physical challenge, and the metaphor makes anthropic grumbling seem absurd:

> Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you declare to me. Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? Deck yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendour. (40:7-9).

God's indignation regarding Job's finitude and his lack of perspective also invites the reader to acknowledge that she shares Job's ignorance and his lamentable finitude:

> Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great! (38:19-21)

It is clearly hard to sustain the argument that God's treatment of Job must be interpreted as subtle iconoclastic mockery of the divine figure. It is true that YHWH consistently plays upon the power imbalance between himself and his creature and this does not endear him to the reader as a figure of generosity or care. It is also true that there is surprising similarity between the style of speech employed by God and by the flawed humans he challenges. Nevertheless God's speeches first and foremost provoke a genuine awareness of the boundary of the human being rather than a rebellion against his perceived heavy-handedness.

Like Job, Job's friends also suffer sarcastic riposte that mocks their wisdom and care. It is noted by a number of commentators that the friends resemble the classical comic figure of the *alazon*, a stock character in Greek theatre known as an imposter and offender, who views himself significantly more favourably than he ought. According to Sypher this is typical of what happens to the *alazon:*

> In the course of the comic debate the supposed wisdom of the alazon is reduced to absurdity, and then the alazon himself becomes a clown.[58]

In the second and third cycles of speeches the friends come increasingly ludicrous resorting, *ad nauseam* to endless repetition. Cox suggests that "in ridiculing they become ridiculous." This notion is also iterated by Whedbee, who adds that "the friends become cruelly and grotesquely comic as they strive with increasing dogmatism to apply their faulty solutions to the wrong problem."[59] The most obvious example of humour at their expense is Job's own criticism of them:

> Galling comforters are you all. Have windy words a limit? What moves you to prattle on? I, too, could talk like you if you were in my place. I could harangue with words, I could shake my head at you, I could strengthen you with my mouth, My quivering lips would soothe you. (16:2b-5).
>
> How you have helped the powerless, Aided the arm that had no strength! How you have counselled the unwise, Offered advice in profusion! With whose help have you uttered words, Whose breath came forth from you? (26:2-4).

Elihu is also singled out as a focus of some comedy. Patrick Skehan has described him as "a caricature."[60] This notion may be justified by "the ludicrous boastfulness of Elihu's introductory remarks [which] may have been introduced as a comical element

[58] Wylie Sypher, 'The meanings of comedy', in *Comedy: Meaning and Form*, ed. by Robert W. Corrigan (San Fransico: Chandler: 1956), pp. 20-51 (p. 42).
[59] William Whedbee, 'The Comedy of Job', in *On humour and the comic in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. by Athalya Brenner-Idan and Yehuda T. Radday (London: A&C Black, 1990), p. 227.
[60] Patrick William Skehan, *Studies in Israelite poetry and wisdom,* Catholic Biblical Quarterly-Monograph Series Vol. 1 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971), p. 382.

to relieve the tragic tension."[61] Here, unambiguously, Elihu plays the role of the younger generation who criticise the old. His hubris and confidence match the stereotype of the foolish youngster.

> I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. I said, `Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.' But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old that are wise, nor the aged that understand what is right. (Job 32:6-9)

Even the mighty Levi'athan represents an opportunity for a joke, his power reimagined in the context of a domestic pet:

> "Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on leash for your maidens?" (41:5)

It must be concluded that there is no character, creature, theme or category that is considered inappropriate as a subject of humour.

Death and Dying

The frequency of humour regarding mortality is a final theme that supports my hypothesis. This is not surprising given that the text is a theodicy, and that it continually juxtaposes human finitude with the eternal and almighty power of the divine. Nevertheless the author's willingness to include the devastation of death and the reality of dying within the scope of his humour adds somewhat to the claim regarding 19:23. If, in this verse, the author is making a self-referential joke at his own expense highlighting the longevity of the text against his own finiteness, it

[61] Bruce Manning Metzger and Roland Edmund Murphy (eds.), *The new Oxford annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books: New revised standard version,* (Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 644. There is some validity in noting that God's indignation in 38:2 ("Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?") makes little sense when applied to Job, but much sense when applied to Elihu, whose folly has "compelled God" to respond. Abigail Pelham therefore asks if it is possible that the narrator is wrong, and that "God's words are addressed, instead, to Elihu?" (Pelham, *Job as Comedy, Revisited*, p. 103.) However, this theory supposes an unreliable narrator, and whilst it satisfies in a great many regards, supposing intentional narratological error at such a crucial moment (which has had the consequence of obscuring the text for millennia) seems unjustifiable.

should be expected that elsewhere in the book there is evidence of the author's willingness to laugh at these themes. There is ample evidence of precisely this approach throughout the book:

> Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth. Between morning and evening they are destroyed; they perish for ever without any regarding it. If their tent-cord is plucked up within them, do they not die, and that without wisdom?' (4:17-21)
>
> No doubt you are the gentry; and with you wisdom will die.(12:2)
>
> One dies in full prosperity, being wholly at ease and secure, his body full of fat and the marrow of his bones moist. Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of good. They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them. (21:23-26)
>
> [The Ostrich] deals cruelly with her young, as if they were not hers; though her labour be in vain, yet she has no fear; because God has made her forget wisdom, and given her no share in understanding. When she rouses herself to flee, she laughs at the horse and his rider. (39:16-18)

In each of these instances the author explores mortality teasingly. The metaphor of the tent-cord, the irony of dying with much wisdom, the moist marrow of dead bones and the laughing ostrich, who leaves her young each evince an irreverent approach to mortality and a remarkably erudite artistry. Without doubt here, and in other occasions where men are described enjoying their days "like a hireling" (14:6), where even their "steps are numbered" (14:13), where Job suggests he would like to "die in his nest" (29:18) and in the final verse when he dies "full of days!" (42:17), death is the subject of ribaldry, fascination and contempt. Given this context it would be almost perverse if the narrator's own mortality were not within his mind whilst he wrote and it therefore seems distinctly possible that beneath Job's appeal for a written record lies a self-referential poetic expression of 'gallows humour.'

3. Hermeneutical Implications

3.1 Corresponding Worlds

The joke of 19:23 draws attention to the narrator's own artistry and circumstance for only the briefest of moments. This passing appearance is a little like Brecht's stage hands, whose presence instantly lays bare the mechanisms by which the dramaturgy is produced and prohibit 'romanticised gawping'. The narrator's self-referentiality consequently diminishes profoundly the reader's sense that the text contains an absolutely omniscient or authoritative voice. How then, is the reader persuaded to accept the authority and theological validity of the text?

In laying bare the device and locating himself and the reader as witnesses to Job's suffering, the narrator invites a reading that is primarily theological rather than historical. The inclusion of a proleptic joke suggests that the narrator and reader are both equally intended to play a role within the narrative as witnesses of Job's experience and that, however, temporally remote they might be, it is the witness of the narrator and the reader that vindicates Job and rehabilitates his reputation extra-textually as a righteous sufferer. In this reading Job's friends become literary foils – their faithless failure and their foolishness corrals the reader to an antithetical sympathy and encourages the reader to stand up for the righteous sufferer and play the part of kinsman-redeemer. It is not that the reader forecloses the necessity of a future living redeemer, rather, in every generation until Job's eventual justification before the throne of God, the reader, as long as she sides with Job (which the prologue demands she must), plays the role of temporary vindicator. Job's plea for a mediator, and then for a witness, crescendos towards his plea for a written record and a kinsman-redeemer:

> He is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself. (Job 9:32-35)
>
> Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high. My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, that he would maintain the right of a man with God, like that of a man with his neighbour. (Job 16:19-21)

The reader, knowing Job's innocence, feels compelled towards mediating or interceding on Job's behalf, and acting as a witness to his innocence. The knowing wink in 'if only my words could be written' therefore comes as a relief, for the written words suggest that the reader is not alone in the endeavour to represent the innocence of the righteous sufferer – the narrator is also working to this end. Implicitly, the existence of the Joban cry for a written testimony includes the book's audience in the community of the faithful who have written, have read, have empathised, have advocated or argued on Job's behalf. There is a chain of reception that starts within the text itself in the narrator's joke, and this interior narratorial self-involvement invites a corresponding agency in the world of the reader.

Job then is an archetype and a figure, and the drama of his suffering anticipates that the reader will fulfil the role of witness to the written record of his suffering. The self-referential narrative allusion regarding the written record of Job's case short-circuits Job's pleas: in the very act of being read the plea invites the reader to vindicate Job's righteousness, and thus become a figural answer to Job's prayers.

The narrator's inclusion of the reader within his joke also reveals that the Joban theodicy is narrated with the presupposition of comparability between Job's world and that of the reader, and an implied sense of contiguousness. The narrative

is written with the expectation that the same types of suffering experienced in the figural world will be known in the reality of the reader: indeed the theodicy depends on the fact that Job's indignation at his unjust suffering resonates in the experience of the reader. The narrator's ironic allusion to himself as one who records Job's words for posterity adds to the sense that a presumed trans-diegetic correspondence of experience lies behind the narrative. The reader is invited into a conspiratorial defence of the righteous sufferer and, perhaps, as they fulfil this role readers are learning to provide consolation for those who suffer in their own world in radical counterpoint to the foolish counsel provided by Job's incompetent friends.

3.2 Narrative mediation

Given the irony throughout the narrative and the explicit relativity of relationship between the audience and the narrator established through this joke, it follows that such humour is potentially a tool established by the narrator to ensure that the reader is "drawn into an act of reading that involves an active part on stage rather than a discreet view from the upper balcony."[62] This unavoidable spectator role is particularly significant for the Joban audience, as it locates the reader in the role of jury, witness and potentially as vindicator of his innocence.[63] As the narrative has established Job's innocence from the beginning in a heavenly scene which the audience is aware of, but which Job's friends are not, the audience, once aware of their role as active witnesses, feel inescapably engaged in the quest for his exoneration. As Job's friends offer him no absolution or comfort the narrator places

[62] Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word,* p. 73.
[63] Benton, *Studies in the Spectator Role*, pp. 188 -191.

increasing burden on the audience to understand their role as potential vindicators: an example of an 'auto-implicatif' obligation.[64]

The role of the narrator is equally interesting, for whilst the narrator's jesting introduces the audience to their role as reader, the joke of 19:23 also highlights the presence of the narrator as a mediator between the situation described and the reader. Any act of narrative releases a story into a world of uncertain reception and this normally results in the loss of control and power for an author.[65] In this one verse however, the narrator positions himself as the fulcrum between the sufferer and their vindication. The Joban narrator unleashes a poetic theodicy into the world with confidence that the proposed solution will win the audience around. The text is filled with confidence that suffering is not a consequence of unrighteousness and that indeed, as the aphorism suggests, 'bad things happen to good people'. In some sense the allusion to Job's need for a written record is like an artist's signature and represents the narrator's desire for recognition of his own role. The narrator in this one verse highlights his own central role in the drama of the narrated theodicy, he never appears within the drama overtly but his presence off stage is undeniable (a little like Godot in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*). In a sense the narrator here highlights the fact that his own work in recording Job's suffering is what secures temporal exoneration for him. It is in the act of writing that Job is rescued from a literary lifetime of uncertainty as a biblical prefiguration of Schrödinger's cat: hanging equally between judgement and vindication. The mediation of the narrator introduces the audience as a witness to Job's suffering and thereby creates an act of

[64] Cf. Ladriere, *La science:* "Receptivity in religious discourse is defined by an active and operative aspect of decision and commitment" (p. 91).
[65] Cf. William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The intentional fallacy', *The Sewanee Review 54*, no. 3 (1946), pp. 468-488.

observation that results in certainty for the sufferer: he exists not in a purgatory of injustice, but in perpetuity as a figure of righteousness.

The role of the narrator as mediator is worthy of further consideration. Whilst it is obvious that the narrator mediates between Job and his sympathetic audience, it is also possible that the narrator situated himself as mediator between Job and God, and, it might be inferred, Israel and God.[66] In the self-referential joke of 19:23 the narrator shows self-awareness of his role and of the capacity of his writing to vindicate both Job and Israel, of whom Job functions as a figure in many ways. Wolfers, for example, argues that the writer of the book is a "heretic" disagreeing with the theodicy of the Deuteronomistic historian.[67] Wolfers' list of Deuteronomic quotations and allusions implies that the narrator of Job was familiar with Deuteronomy and that Job's suffering is a litany of the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Taking the role of story-teller and ensuring that Job is vindicated therefore suggests that the Joban narrator is also acting as the counterpart to *ha-satan* ('the satan'), the adversary, of Job 1:6-12.[68] Where *ha-satan* accuses and tests, the narrator mediates and intercedes, presenting Job's case to the audience and suggesting a context for Job's divine vindication. The narrator therefore presents his own role as affording temporary earthly prefiguration of the heavenly advocate, as though lasting memorial represents a step towards eventual redemption.[69] The connection between the

[66] "Job is an allegorical figure representing the people of Judah and their King Hezekiah in the time of the Assyrian conquests." D. Wolfers, *Deep things*, p. 15. Susannah Ticciati elaborates on this and establishes strong reasons to consider Job as pious figuration of Israel, who undergoes a journey of radical transformation of his religious identity. S. Ticciati, *Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), pp. 58-61.

[67] Wolfers argues that Job suffers the torments that are predicted in the curses for disobedience listed in Deuteronomy, and that as a righteous sufferer Job is intended to undermine the legitimacy of the Deuteronmic model of law and righteousness. Wolfers, *Deep things*, p. 28

[68] A detailed study is offered by Norman Habel who suggests that ha-satan is "a role specification meaning 'the accuser/adversary/doubter." Habel, *The Book of Job*, p. 89.

[69] The significance of memorials in human burial traditions is the subject of rich anthropological discussion. See for example Yuri Smirnov, 'Intentional human burial: Middle Palaeolithic (last glaciation) beginnings', *Journal of World Prehistory 3*, no. 2 (1989), pp. 199-233.

immediate mediation of the narrator alluded to in the self-referential joke and the eventual mediation of the ultimate redeemer is evident in the ease of transition from the longing for the written record to the confident declaration of eschatological vindication:

> If only my words were written, if only they were cut in a book
> With a pen of iron on lead, carved on rock forever:
> But I know that my redeemer lives,
> and he will stand up on the earth in the end.[70]

Given the narrator's role in helping to fulfil Job's longing for vindication, it is arguable that the narrator is also fulfilling a mediating role on behalf of other righteous sufferers, including perhaps, Israel. The narrator, as counterpoint to the adversary, presents a story which suggests that suffering is the consequence of adversarial testing. Through this perspective he proffers hope that despite Deuteronomistic curses, Israel may legitimately confront God, if not face to face, then at least through arbitration.

> The book of Job is [thus] an example of scripture in conversation with itself as it draws on other biblical texts, challenges their veracity and relevance, and draws new conclusions. [71]

This is nowhere more obvious than in the plea for a written record, for in this moment the Joban author references his own artistry and at the same time subverts God's instruction to the prophet Isaiah. Instead of taking up the role of the witness against Israel, as was demanded of Isaiah, in his self-referential joke the Joban narrator re-casts the role of witness as one whose story-telling resists dogmatic theodicies and instead testifies against injustice, inequity and suffering. Forging a sympathetic brief for himself, the Joban narrator does what is demanded by the prophets but achieves

[70] My own translation.
[71] Stephen Cook, 'A Reading of Job as a Theatrical Work: Challenging a Retributive Deuteronomistic Theodicy', *Literature & Aesthetics 24*, no. 2 (2014) pp. 39-62 (p. 62).

a quite different end, attesting to the innocence of the righteous sufferer and the people who wrestle with God, rather than their guilt.

> And now, go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness for ever. (Isa. 30:8)

Chapter Five:

“The Master Commended the Dishonest Steward”

1. Introduction

1.1 Which master?

> He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. And he called him and said to him, `What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'
>
> And the steward said to himself, `What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, `How much do you owe my master?' He said, `A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, `Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, `And how much do you owe?' He said, `A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, `Take your bill, and write eighty.'
>
> The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.
>
> And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. (Luke 16:1-9).

The Parable of the dishonest steward is one of the most enigmatic of Jesus' teachings. The parable is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It is located in a section which recounts Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51 to 19:27). It succeeds the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) and is followed by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The parable begins in 16.1 with the standard idiom "there was a certain man" (*anthrōpos tis ēn plousios*), similar versions of which also appear in 16:19 (almost identically: "There was a certain rich man", *anthrōpos de tis ēn plousios*); 7:41 ("And there was a certain creditor"); 14:16 ("A certain man once gave a great banquet"); 15:11 ("There was a certain man who had two sons"); and 19:12 ("A certain nobleman"). Whilst this introductory formula

marks fairly clearly the beginning of an embedded parable there is considerable debate about the textual limits of the parable, the relationship between the parable and the appended teachings and the meaning of the parable itself.

There are a number of problems for the reader, "which have been multiplied by scholars into incalculable difficulties."[1] The accepted crux of problems surrounding interpretations of the parable is undoubtedly to be found in verse 8a, where "The Master commended the unjust steward" (*kai epēnesen ho kyrios ton oikonomon tēs adikias*). The master's praise appears incongruous and without justification, for the steward has been doubly dishonest. The multitude of articles seeking exegetical resolution for this verse demonstrates how difficult it is to comprehend why the master would laud the shrewdness of one who had just cheated him.

This incongruity is accentuated by the abnormally opaque meaning of the parable – after all, whilst it would be strange for a master to praise his steward it seems even less probable that Jesus would employ a tale of such unrighteousness as an example for his disciples. Further, the odd moral message with which Jesus ends the parable also solicits attention. "Making friends by means of unrighteous mammon" is not only without parallel in other accounts of Jesus' teaching, it is entirely at odds with other Lucan teachings about the use of wealth, notably Luke 14:12-14, in which precisely the reverse practice is advocated. In addition, whilst "making friends by means of unrighteous mammon" is recommended in one clause, in the next Luke implies condemnation of the steward, explicitly criticising unfaithful

[1] David A. De Silva, 'The Parable of the prudent steward and its Lucan context', *Criswell Theological Review* 6.2 (1993), pp. 255-68 (p. 255).

stewardship: “And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?”

Modern readership can be usefully divided according to the solution that is offered to the initial problem question, “Why does the master praise the steward?”[2] The secondary issues regarding why Jesus uses the tale and how the subsequent teaching matches the parable can only be attended to once a model explaining verse 8a has been resolved. Approaches to this verse may be classified broadly as follows:

1. Praise is offered for some reason that is now obscured because of mistranslation or misunderstanding at some point in the transmission of the story.
2. The rich man praises the steward because he comes to a realisation of some moral, social or financial benefit to himself (enlightened self-interest).
3. Jesus’ praise for the steward is ironic, and through his words he intends castigation of those who unworthily seek to buy friendship (ironic praise).
4. Jesus praises the steward even though he is a cheat, because although he has stolen from his master he has been generous,
5. Even though he has been deceitful, the steward is an example of shrewdness and this is why he is praised.

Each of these approaches merits careful analysis as a departure point for further consideration regarding the meaning of the tale and its application.

[2] Cf. Dennis J. Ireland, ‘A history of recent interpretation of the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13)’, *Westminster Theological Journal 51* (1989), pp. 293-318.

1.2 Why does the master praise the steward?

Errata

There are three different suggestions as to where in the text errors might have occurred in translation or transmission which have resulted in the received text losing the original meaning of the parable. Some suggest the Greek preposition *ek* (from) is the problem, some posit the term *adikia* (unrighteous) has been mistranslated and a third theory suggests ambiguity in the Aramaic terms *brk* and *'rym*, have resulted in Greek translations of *plousias* (shrewdness) and *epenensen* (praise) where the original ought to have been rendered "foolishness" and "condemnation".

The earliest modern suggestion of mistranslation came from H. Compston (1920) who supposed that Jesus' exhortation in 16:9 was misunderstood or mistranslated by Luke.[3] In his view the instruction to "Make friends for yourself by means of unrighteous mammon" is an exhortation which makes little sense in its current form. He cited 12 examples from the *Oxford Hebrew Lexicon* in which the preposition *min* (from) which he presumed to be the most likely Aramaic idiom leading to the use of *ek* (from) in the Greek, was used to mean 'away from' or 'without.'[4] His alternative reading therefore has Jesus say, "Make friends *without* dirty money, so that when wealth fails or ye die, you will have a more enduring refuge."[5]

R. Scott extended this argument further by highlighting the Aramaic context of the verse and claiming that, 'the mammon of unrighteous' is as Hebraistic a phrase

[3] "Assuming that Jesus spoke Aramaic, what word would He have used for *ek* in the sense of 'out of' or 'by means of' The Greek *ek* is most probably intended to represent the Aramaic *min.* Now that preposition might also mean 'away from', ie. 'without.'" H.F.B. Compston, 'Friendship without Mammon', *Expository Times 31* (1920), p. 282.
[4] Cf. Proverbs 20:8, Numbers 15:24, Isaiah 14:19, Genesis 4:11, Genesis 27:39, Job 11:15, Job 21:9, Proverbs 1:33, Jeremiah 48:45 11s 22:3, Judges 5:11 and Zephaniah 3:18.
[5] Compston, 'Friendship without Mammon', p. 282.

as one could expect to find, even in Greek translation and therefore "it would be natural to regard the preceding preposition also as a Semitism."[6] This would mean that he Aramaic *min*, might have been the original term, and one of its meanings is "away from". Scott suggested that the Greek preposition *ev* should have been used if the meaning was truly "by means of". J.C. Wansey came to the same conclusion via a different hypothesis: "All ambiguity would disappear and a new light be thrown on the parable, if a single change of half a word is made in the text as it now stands."[7] He conjectured a Greek rather than Aramaic source for the problem, whereby a form of scribal reverse dittography had led to the textual presence of *ek* rather than *ektos*. Wansey proposes that the text be restored to read *ektos* (without). Thus according to this model it is Luke's failure to capture the ambiguous meaning of the Aramaic preposition *min* or to accurately render the Greek which leads to such confusing moral application. This interpretation naturally leads to the conclusion that it is the steward's master who praises him in 8a and that Jesus' subsequent moral teachings should be understood in opposition to the rich man's praise.[8]

More recently some who assert an error in translation or transcription have focused on the suggestion that the word *alikia* (experience) has erroneously been rendered *adikia* (unrighteousness). This notion was first suggested by C.S. Mann:

> May there not be an error in the text? In reading or writing from dictation a lambda might easily be misread as a delta. If then in our text in 16:8 ADIKIA is read as ALIKIA… we would then have a manager commended for his experience. What I have suggested is no more than intelligent guess-work.[9]

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[6] R. B. Y. Scott, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi. 1ff.)', *Expository Times* 49 (1937), pp. 234-35 (p. 235).

[7] J. C. Wansey, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward: An Interpretation', *The Expository Times 47* (1935), pp. 39-40 (p. 39). Cf. Pietro Bortone, *Greek prepositions: From antiquity to the present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 163.

[8] Thus Wansey concludes that Jesus' explanation of the parable was confused in translation and "has cast a shadow of its own obscurity over the story it is supposed to explain." Ibid., p. 40.

[9] C. S. Mann, 'Unjust Steward or Prudent Manager?' *The Expository Times 102*, no. 8 (1991), pp. 234-235. "If the guess-work be allowed as a legitimate hypothesis, then I would go on to claim that the

Thomas McDaniel makes a suggestion similar to Mann's, but rather than swapping a lamda (λ) for a delta (δ) posits that the affirmative *dikaias* (faithful) is a more appropriate translation than the negative *adikias* of the received text.[10] McDaniel offers no model for how this error was derived, instead moving onto a "philological methodology" to explain the problems in 16:9, in which he repeats Compston and Scott's views as outlined above.[11] Thus Mann and McDaniel suggest that the text really reads, "The master commended the righteous/experienced steward for his shrewdness."[12]

In their different ways Compston, Scott, Wansey, Mann, McDaniel and Schwarz all argue that their version of the parable is 'simpler.' Whilst this may be true of the reading they offer, their hypothetical reconstructions explaining the processes that lead to error in translation or sustained misinterpretation are manifestly more complex. Imagining that Luke was unaware of the complications surrounding this parable suggests an unreasonably naïve model of authorship and narration; suggesting that he appended an irrelevant moral message because he didn't understand the parable is absurd (especially given his is the only Gospel to recount the tale); and reducing the story to a simple moral message is inappropriately insipid.

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reading I have suggested the change of a single Greek uncial [transforms] the parable into an injunction not to be as self-righteously 'clever' as the exclusive Essenes." Ibid. p. 235.

[10] Thomas F. McDaniel, *Luke's misreading in 16:9 of two Hebrew words* (Wayne, PA: Palmer Theological Seminary, 1968).

[11] McDaniel's model is manifestly inconsistent, for he seeks to change the first occurrence of *adikia* (16:8) but happily maintains the second (16:9) in which "A straightforward and simple translation of the Greek has Jesus commanding the disciples to make friends for themselves *from* unrighteous mammon. This is as implausible… the simplest explanation is that Luke has misunderstood the proper derivation of a notoriously ambiguous Hebrew homographs" (Ibid. p. 12).

[12] A final hypothesis for a rereading of erroneous translation is developed by Günther Schwarz. He suggests that if Jesus spoke in Aramaic, Luke would be entirely blind as to whether Jesus meant to 'praise the steward for his wisdom' or 'condemn the steward for his deceit.' This view has not received much prominence. Günther Schwarz, '"…lobte den betrügerischen Verwalter?" (Lukas 16:8a)', *Biblishce Zeitschrift Neue Folge 18* (1974), pp. 94-95.

Enlightened Self-Interest

There are a number of interpreters who, rather than seek an error in the text to rationalise the master's praise, suggest that the master praises the steward as a consequence of his realisation that the steward's debt remission is actually shrewd and is of some social or ethical benefit to him. These commentators suggest that the rich man perceives some personal benefit arising from the steward's actions and praises him accordingly. Landry and May for example emphasise the implausibility of a dishonoured master praising his steward, and suggested emphatically that there were no imaginable circumstances in Greco-Roman society where this could be justified. Consequently in their summary of the parable they concluded that the master's praise must indicate that the steward's actions had benefitted him. They suggest:

> A master hears that his steward has been misappropriating funds… The steward faces a crisis…He forgives a portion of the amount owed by his master's debtors. People would assume that the steward was acting on the master's orders, so these gestures would make the master look generous and charitable in the eyes of society. The master hears what the steward has done and praises him for his actions.[13]

Landry and May argue that very few of Jesus' parables actually seek to deconstruct societal norms, and that in fact many "are more mundane, ordinary illustrations of points and ideas that were not beyond the capacity of average, uneducated, ancient persons to understand."[14] On this basis they argue that the most plausible explanation for the master's praise is that the steward had genuinely benefitted him: only such a simple conclusion makes sense.

[13] David Landry and Ben May, 'Honor restored: New light on the parable of the prudent steward (Luke 16: 1-8a)', *Journal of Biblical Literature 119*, no. 2 (2000), pp. 287-309 (p. 309).
[14] *Loc. cit.*

John Goodrich has recently published a comparable argument.[15] He suggests that the master's praise is earned and deserved by the steward and he argues that the parable is an illustration of "the strict ethical demands of the kingdom of God."[16] Goodrich suggests that in antiquity, good stewardship was not synonymous with "the meticulous collection of the master's debt", rather "wealthy proprietors often had to reduce debts… in order to enable and encourage their repayment."[17]

For all their insight into Greco-Roman stewardship and the agricultural practices advocated by Pliny, Cicero and Columella, Landry, May and Goodrich do not overcome the basic paradox of the parable: even if the steward is praised for prudent remittal of debts, he has already earned the epithet 'dishonest'.[18] The parable includes no suggestion that the steward acts out of righteous intent; the debt reduction is as underhand as the initial deception, and is only undertaken begrudgingly by the steward to save himself from serious punishment. Consequently, as the tale offers no reversal of this judgement it is impossible for the audience to share the conclusion the steward has somehow changed his behaviour for positive purpose. Furthermore if the verdict is that of the rich man, who somehow realises that his steward's deceit is to his benefit this verdict rests in opposition to the moral message of Jesus beyond the tale regarding honesty and the value of serving only one master.

Landry and May's, and Goodrich's models leave readers surmising that the profit loving-rich man was willing to overlook dishonesty having found reduction of

[15] John K. Goodrich, 'Voluntary Debt Remission and the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16: 1–13)', *Journal of Biblical Literature 131*, no. 3 (2012), pp. 547-566.
[16] Ibid., p. 566.
[17] Ibid., p. 553.
[18] The same may be said of Rene Baergen's analysis which focuses on Roman slave practices. Rene A. Baergen, 'Servant, manager or slave? Reading the parable of the rich man and his steward (Luke 16: 1-8a) through the lens of ancient slavery', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 35*, no. 1 (2006), pp. 25-38 (p.33).

debt to be mysteriously to his benefit, and also that Jesus saw this self-interested business strategy as analogous to prudent discipleship. Given the dishonesty of the steward this is a dissatisfying solution indeed, and we are no closer to understanding why Jesus would agree with the master's praise of his steward.

Ironic praise

A number of studies have advocated the idea that the unexpected praise for the servant is rooted in irony. Proponents of this view include Paul G. Bretscher (1951) Geoffrey Paul (1958), Donald R. Fletcher (1963) Isak J. du Plessis (1990), S.E. Porter (1990) and Douglas M. Parrott (1991).[19] Bretscher suggested that in verses 8 and 9 Jesus should be understood to mean the exact opposite of what he said. His ironic commendation of the steward is actually a rigorous condemnation. When he says, "The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" he means, "This is a wisdom the sons of light would not dream of." And when he says, "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations" he means, "Use all God's gifts to make friends of the sinners of this world… Let them [try and] open the gates of everlasting habitations you fool!"[20] Bretscher argued that this kind of irony is only conveyed in modulation of the voice, and that therefore it is

[19] Paul G. Bretscher, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward—A New Approach to Luke 16: 1-9', *Concordia Theological Monthly 22* (1951), pp. 757-62; Geoffrey Paul, 'Studies in Texts: The Unjust Steward and the Interpretation of Luke 16. 9', *Theology 61*, no. 455 (1958), pp. 189-193; Donald R. Fletcher, 'The Riddle of the Unjust Steward: Is Irony the Key?' *Journal of Biblical Literature 82*, no. 1, 1963, pp. 15–30; Isak J. Du Plessis, 'Philanthropy or Sarcasm?—Another Look At the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16: 1-13)', *Neotestamentica 24* (1990), pp. 1-20; S. E. Porter, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13): Irony Is the Key', in *The Bible in Three Dimensions* ed. by David J. A. Clines (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 127-134; Douglas M. Parrott, 'The Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-8a) and Luke's Special Parable Collection', *NTS 37* (1991), 499-515.

[20] Bretscher, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward', p. 759. Du Plessis offers almost exactly the same sarcastic paraphrase as Bretshcer for verse 9, reading, "Make friends by applying your money or worldly possessions and find out whether it can earn you eternal life! See if these 'friends' will receive you into their 'eternal home.'" Isak J. Du Plessis, 'Philanthropy or Sarcasm?, p. 18.

lost in writing. In his view only the context of the narrative could reveal that Jesus was being ironic. Parrot's conclusion is very similar. He states,

> The steward should have been condemned. Since he was not… there is a problem with the received text… the original text remains but it lost its original character… It is essentially an ironic lesson teaching that… forgiveness is incompatible with trusting one's own cleverness for ultimate security.[21]

Donald Fletcher contends that it is impossible to construct any sense in which Jesus' praise of the steward could be compatible with other sayings in Luke, noting for example that other parables conclude with warnings about the cost of discipleship and the uselessness of worldly wealth, for example Luke 14:33, "So therefore whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."[22] Consequently, Fletcher suggests that the Gospel context demands that the applause be treated as irony. He notes that in Luke there are examples of "clean" and "righteous" being used as sarcasm (Luke 5:31 and 15:7). He posits that the "shrewdness" credited to the steward in 16:8a is equally, explicitly and unmistakably ironic, its humorous tone all the more evident in the oxymoronic juxtaposition "eternal tents."[23] His paraphrase of 16:9 is as follows:

> Make friends for yourselves," he seems to taunt; "imitate the example of the steward; use the unrighteous mammon; surround yourselves with the type of insincere, self-interested friendship it can buy; how far will this carry you when the end comes and you are finally dismissed?[24]

I. J. du Plessis and S. Porter broadly follow Fletcher's model. Both contend that if the pronouncements of verses 8 and 9 are read at face value there is an insurmountable contradiction of Jesus' teaching elsewhere.[25] Both suggest, therefore, that the steward's shrewdness in v. 8a must be applauded ironically "to encourage the same

[21] Parrott, 'The Dishonest Steward', p. 515.
[22] Fletcher, 'The Riddle', p. 21.
[23] Ibid., p. 20.
[24] Ibid., p. 29.
[25] Porter, 'Irony is the Key', p.127.

enthusiasm in Jesus' disciples for eternal interests."[26] Porter challenges the arbitrary distinctions drawn by many who attempt to separate what the steward did from how he did it, suggesting that a surface reading which allows the steward to be both sacked and praised for his dishonesty is irrational.[27] There is some validity in this, as the text provides no evidence of charitable intent or an endeavour to achieve social justice. Nevertheless the text does offer more discrimination than Porter notes. This is particularly evident in verses 1 and 8. The steward is charged with "wastefulness" (16:1) he is then described as "dishonest" (16:8) before finally being praised for "shrewdness" (16:8). This suggests that the parable is fundamentally constructed to distinguish between these vices and virtues, despite Porter's insistence to the contrary.

It is very hard to justify a thesis of ironic praise: the audience are given inadequate pointers and reaching this conclusion is only possible if there is no chance at all that the steward's shrewdness was actually commendable.

Stolen Generosity

The most traditional approach to verse 8a is to suggest that whilst the steward has been dishonest his actions somehow merit applause from Jesus.[28] The majority of interpreters who adopt this approach seek to reconcile the behaviour of the steward with Jesus' teaching about generosity and justice, and therefore suggest that the steward's remission of debt, whether as an act of generosity or self-interest, is an

[26] Dave L. Mathewson, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16: 1-13): A Re-examination of the Traditional View in Light of Recent Challenges', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 38* (1995), pp. 29-40 (p.38).
[27] Porter, 'Irony is the Key', p.129. Cf. Greg Forbes, *The God of old: The role of the Lukan parables in the purpose of Luke's Gospel,* (London: A&C Black, 2000), p.174.
[28] The range or arguments stretches far beyond the dichotomy suggested by Dodd, who divided approaches between those that were eschatological and those that were monetary interpretations. Charles H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Scribner, 1961), p. 17.

example of charity that Christians should imitate.[29] In effect the message of the parable is that Jesus' disciples should give up their worldly wealth to help the poor, and so gain the friendship of God. Some significant nuance is found in variations on this theme, for example Paul Gächter (1949) suggested that the dishonesty of the steward initially is broadly irrelevant: it is an unnecessary background. Only the foreground actions of the steward really matter, and these teach the disciples to "give riches to brethren in need."[30] This view is repeated regularly, including by R. Daniel Schumacher (2012) who summarises the position: "The steward is unjust but his generosity is wise."[31]

Others offer alternative nuance, suggesting that the manager gave up his commission to decrease the total amounts that the debtors owe to the rich man. They conclude that, through one mechanism or another, this means disciples should give up worldly wealth in order to somehow gain eternal wealth. This is the view of Dennis Ireland (1989), David De Silva (1993) and C.L. Geluk (2011) who exemplify this perspective:

> The parable invites the use of possessions in service of the needy.[32]
>
> The reader response is intended to be acts of generosity.[33]
>
> The master is God, who praises the steward for finally benefitting his neighbour not himself.[34]

[29] Dennis Ireland suggests that 50 out of 140 commentaries surveyed interpret broadly along these lines. Ireland, 'A History', p. 295.
[30] Paul Gächter, 'The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly 12* (1950), pp. 121-31 (p. 131).
[31] R. Daniel Schumacher, 'Saving like a Fool and Spending like it Isn't Yours: Reading the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16: 1–8a) in Light of the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12: 16–20)', *Review & Expositor 109,* no. 2 (2012), pp. 269-276.
[32] Ireland, 'A History', p. 318.
[33] De Silva, 'The parable of the prudent steward', p. 267.
[34] C.L. Geluk, *De onrechtvaardige rentmeester Solidariteit en vuile handen* (Utrecht University PhD Diss., 2011), p. 69.

A third suggestion is that Jesus praises the steward for his actions as he has 'unwittingly' redressed the oppression of the poor. In this model the steward's redistribution of wealth is an illustration of Jesus' message to the wealthy Christian disciples that they should not turn their back on the poor. This idea is advanced by M. Ball (1995) who surmised that the parable invited disciples to win friends in heaven by making friends among the poor on earth.[35] R.A. Baergen (2006) similarly suggested that the parable is a message of good news for the powerless – for it highlights the idea that the ethic of justice supersedes the obligations of employment or even moral norms pertaining to honesty.[36] F.E. Udoh (2009) suggested that the parable in its current form is incidentally subversive in that it undermines social obligations with the notion that commitment to heaven outweighs any other. In his view the original form of the tale is unreconstructable.[37]

Generosity and social justice are laudable virtues and Jesus consistently demands that his disciples develop these characteristics. However, the problem with this interpretation is that there are no sign posts within the parable that would lead the audience to notice 'unwitting' generosity, hypothetical reduction of commission or that the steward had suddenly developed a social conscience. To the contrary he is overtly self-interested and in the verdict of 8a he continues to be characterised as dishonest and shrewd.

Deceitful Wisdom

In contrast to the above suggestions, some commentators continue to criticise the profligacy of the steward and identify only the steward's shrewdness or foresight as

[35] Michael Ball, 'The Parables of the Unjust Steward and the Rich Man and Lazarus', *The Expository Times 106*, no. 11 (1995), pp 329-330.
[36] Baergen, 'Servant, manager or slave', p. 38.
[37] Fabian E. Udoh, 'The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16: 1-8 [13])', *Journal of Biblical Literature 128*, no. 2 (2009), pp. 311-335.

redeemable features. Joachim Jeremias' view is fairly typical here. He asserts that, "Jesus' purpose is to assert that 'The steward is a rascal; but he is a wonderfully clever rascal.'"[38] Jeremias argues that there is a significant difference between Jesus praising the clever steward "because he acted dishonestly" and praising the dishonest steward "because he acted cleverly."[39] Accordingly, Jesus can praise clever behaviour without praising dishonesty. Other proponents of this view, including much earlier commentators such as F. Godet (1870) and R.C. Trench (1882), similarly argue that lauding the steward's plan is by no means the same as affording him moral approval.[40] It remains common to suggest that Jesus uses an example of a morally reprehensible character to illustrate how much more his believers should show prudence, foresight and wisdom.[41] A further useful insight is added by J.M. Creed who recognises that Luke uses other unrighteous characters on two other occasions, in the parable of the ungracious friend (11:5-7) and the unjust judge (18:1-8).[42] This certainly suggests that Luke is not uncomfortable employing a parable that draws a moral message from less than moral behaviour.[43]

Emphasising some element of shrewdness as the reason for the master's praise has the significant advantage of meaningfully connecting the parable to the subsequent Lucan explanation, "for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." It is necessarily the case

[38] Joachim Jeremias, *The parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scrivner's sons, 1972), p.43.
[39] *Loc. cit.*
[40] Richard C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (London: Macmillan, 1882) p. 443: "Prudence… offers a sufficient analagon to a Christian virtue." F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, vol. 2, translated M.D. Cusin, 4th edition, (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1881), p. 167: "What on the part of the steward was only wise unfaithfulness, becomes wise faithfulness in the servant of Jesus." See also Thomas Walter Manson, *Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 292.
[41] Cf. Alexander B. Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels: The Expositors Greek New Testament, Volume I*, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans), pp. 584-288; Dodd, *The parables of the Kingdom*, p. 17 and A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use* (London: Clarke, 1930), p. 133.
[42] John Martin Creed, *The Gospel According to St Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 201.
[43] Ibid., p. 151.

that the parable relates to shrewdness above all else because it is this virtue alone that is praised in verse 8b. As this explanatory phrase is adjoined simply through the preposition *hoti* (that, because or since) it is evidently 'shrewdness of the sons of this world' that is somehow demonstrated by the steward. However, whilst this reading avoids unnecessary abstraction it does leave the reader with a significant narrative anomaly. This was clearly identified by Joachim Jeremias:

> If the beginning of vs. 9 is a Lucan composition, which would seem to leave Luke at variance with himself. How is it that Jesus in the third person interrupts his first person discourse?[44]

Many commentators have therefore avoided this solution because of the diegetic entanglement it entails, as is further explained by Fletcher:

> As the material is found in Luke's gospel it would be awkward to read it with the *kyrios* of vs. 8a referring to Jesus himself, because of the way Jesus speaks in the first person in vs. 9.[45]

If 8a represents the voice of Jesus praising a shrewd 'rascal' then the purpose of the parable becomes fairly clear. It is not an opaque tale about accidental virtue, it is not a badly mistranslated parable and it is not an example of misconstrued irony. However, it is a moment of considerable confusion which muddles the master of the steward and Jesus, the master of the primary diegesis.

1.3 Hypothesis

The identity of the master in 8a defines the interpretative problem of the parable. If 'the master' is the rich man of the parable then the reader is left with the difficulty of developing an interpretation in which the rich man perceived benefit from the actions of his steward. Those who do suggest that the "master" of 8a is synonymous with the rich man of 16:1 argue that the parable ends with his unexpected praise, rather like

[44] Jeremias, *The parables*, pp. 45-46.
[45] Fletcher, 'The Riddle', p. 16.

the unexpected intervention of the father in the parable of the prodigal son (15:20), the host of the great feast (14:23) or the owner of the vineyard (20:13). Most commentators adopt this stance and there are numerous translations which attempt to bind the judgement pronounced in verse 8a to the opinion of the hypo-diegetic master, including the following variations:

> And *his* master commended him… (NASB)
> *So* the master praised… (NKJV and NCV)
> The master praised *his* dishonest steward (CEV).

However, no logical reason is established within the text to justify such a positive reaction to the double deception of the steward and, as established above, attempts to reconstruct such a reason misconstrue either the character of the steward, the benefit of his actions or both.

If, conversely, *ho kyrios* is translated as 'the Master' who told the parable (Jesus) the reader is left questioning why Jesus is so clumsily moved from his position as first-person story-teller to first-person commentator via a pronouncement in the third-person, and why Jesus used a story of a dishonest man to advance the virtue of shrewdness. Many commentators have adopted this approach concluding that the master must be Jesus, but the reasons for advancing this solution often seem to rest on intuitive judgements. Repeated aphorisms such as, "no master would truly praise a steward who cheated him" or "only Jesus would offer such a counter intuitive judgement" generate equally problematic questions, for example, "Would Jesus praise a steward that a master wouldn't praise?" or "Could an audience be expected to understand such a judgement if Jesus was truly being so counterintuitive?"[46] Consequently the identity of the "master" has remained

[46] Cf. Jea Yeol Jeong, *The role of the Lukan parables in terms of the purpose of Luke's gospel: perspectives on Christian life* (University of the Free State PhD diss., 2011).

problematic. Nevertheless, I contend that there are four good reasons to read *ho kyrios* as Jesus:

1. Everywhere else in Luke's Gospel the absolute use of 'the master' (*ho kyrios*) with the definite article refers to Jesus. It is this form found in 8a.[47] The adjective *plousios* (rich) in Luke is always used negatively – it is therefore highly unlikely that the rich man of 16:1 corresponds with God, as masters sometimes do in Jesus' parables of servants and their employers. This means that the master's praise in 8a may stand in contrast to the response that would have been expected of the steward's *actual* (hypo-diegetic) master.
2. The parable sits within a Lucan context that focuses the reader upon surprising judgements and an unexpected verdict on the nature of wisdom (*phronimos*). As the parable leads the audience from the start to predict the rich man's response, if the master of 8a is Jesus, his voice achieves an act of refocusing his audience's attention on the reality that the parable is not about the response of the rich man, but is actually focused on the behaviour of the steward/disciples. This violation of normal story-telling rules, in which the audience finds the story is not about what they expected, is a technique used frequently by Luke.[48]
3. The parable is consistent with contemporaneous tales of servants outwitting their masters. In employing such a tale Jesus' use of an immoral

[47] The closest exception to this rule is found in 12:36 where *ton kyrion* (their master) is used to describe the master that servants wait for, but this is not quite the same *as ho kyrios*. Furthermore *ton kyrion* is found in the parable of the bridegroom (12:36-48) which contains precisely the same confusion between the lord of the servant and the eschatological Lord as is found in the dishonest steward.

[48] Cf. A.J. Hultgren who suggests that those who listen are led from the start to predict a surprising response from the master, as they are being encouraged to discover a "new set of rules, which desecrates those old, but that lead to heaven." A.J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), p 148.

character to achieve a spiritual lesson is consistent with the rabbinic technique of *qal wahomer.* It is therefore not inconceivable that Jesus deliberately advanced a tale of an unrighteous man to highlight the virtue of shrewdness and that he considered this characteristic even more important for his followers than for the steward in his tale. Shrewdness is quite different from honesty, and Jesus' teaching in this parable discerns between the two. A man can be contemptibly dishonest, whilst also being admirably shrewd.

4. This is not the only parable Luke interrupts with extra-diegetic comment or pronouncement from the primary diegesis. Indeed the boundaries of Jesus' parables and his interactions with the audience within the primary diegesis are often blurred in Luke's gospel. Luke 16:1-7 is also not the only Lucan parable which demonstrates premature completion or metaleptic confusion.

My approach here is not entirely unique. An important recent study by Ryan Schellenberg has also advanced the suggestion that verse 8a is a moment of metalepsis.[49] Schellenberg's employment of Genette's model of narrative layers is original to this problem, and there is much about his approach with which I concur. Schellenberg follows a great number of commentators in suggesting that *ho kyrios* (the master) of verse 8 is Jesus and not the 'rich man' mentioned in verse 1.[50] Accordingly, the parable really ended in verse 7 with the steward still in crisis, and 8a is a moment of metalepsis which truncates the tale and returns to the primary

[49] Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' pp. 263-288.
[50] Cf. Ireland, 'A History' (p. 310) and De Silva, 'The parable of the prudent steward' (p. 268) who also advance this view.

diegesis.[51] Schellenberg analyses other Lucan transgressions between the hypo-diegetic story-world of the parables and the primary diegesis of Jesus and his disciples. He notes that it is not unusual for Luke to interrupt the hypo-diegetic world and muddle the narrative framework of the parable with Jesus' own comments. The oddity of this interpretation is that the pronouncement of verse 8 is made in the third person, suggesting that Jesus' parable and explanation are interrupted by an extra-diegetic narrative comment that muddles the transition from the hypo-diegetic parable to the primary diegesis. Schellenberg employs Genette's model of metalepsis to explain this confusion, and posits that metaleptic contamination of the story-telling voice is the most useful lens for explaining the transgression of narrative layers and consequent narratological confusion. I concur, and find that a reading which accepts the master's praise as a moment of metalepsis provokes a convincing sense of the transcendence of Jesus' judgement.

My hypothesis is broadly in alignment with Schellenberg's approach. I will emphasise some divergent details and will approach the text differently. In particular, I suggest that the parable of the unfaithful steward is essentially incomplete; for Luke has constructed a narrative in which Jesus, through the voice of the narrator, interrupts the meta-diegetic tale that he himself is telling, creating a sense of an omni-diegetic 'master' who offers praise for the steward before the audience could ever have been allowed to expect such an outcome and before the parable has achieved any sense of resolution. The reader anticipates the response of the rich man but instead Luke interrupts the tale with Jesus' verdict: an unexpected theological interpretation vindicating shrewd profligacy and challenging the disciples

[51] John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 109.Cf. Bernard B. Scott, *Hear Then the parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 260.

within the primary diegesis well before the story had a chance to reach its dramatic conclusion.[52] As such it is an unsatisfying tale which, rather like an imperfect cadence, leaves its audience without a sense of clear completion. This degree of pluripotency has potential to generate enhanced theological impact and place interpretative obligations on the reader.

Remarkably, as long as it is accepted that 8a is a metaleptic interruption a profound range of background issues are resolved. In support of this hypothesis I now examine Luke's usage of the masters, stewards and rich men; the significance of shrewdness in connected parables; contemporary tales of smart servants; the rabbinic technique of qal wahomer and other examples of metalepsis in Luke.

2. The Real Kyrios

2.1 Luke's Glossary: Masters, Stewards and Rich Men

The Master vs. His Master

Luke's general application of 'the master' elsewhere in the gospel is highly significant for attempts to understand to whom *ho kyrios* in 16:8a refers. The absolute use of *ho kyrios* occurs on twenty three other occasions in the gospel. In seven of these 'the Lord' refers to God.[53] Six occur before the birth of Jesus and the one further occurrence referring to God is found in 20:42 which quotes directly Psalm 110. In fourteen other occasions 'the Lord' refers unambiguously to Jesus.[54] In the two

[52] Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 278.
[53] Cf. Luke 1:25; 1:28; 1:32; 1:58; 1:68 and 2:15.
[54] Cf. Luke 2:11; 7:13; 7:31; 10:1; 11:39; 12:42; 13:11;17:6; 18:6; 19:31; 19:34; 22:31; 22:61 and 24:34.

remaining instances (12:42 and 14:23) ‘the master’ is a reference to a hypo-diegetic character who represents either Jesus or God.

> And the servant said, `Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And *the master* said to the servant, `Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.' (Luke 14:22-24)

Whilst these examples plainly refer to a hypo-diegetic master, the correspondence in identity between this master and ‘the LORD’ is indisputable. Consequently it is fair to say that even in the two occurrences which are figurative, Luke’s employment of *ho kyrios* always refers to ‘the LORD.’ The only ambiguity is whether Luke sees references to Jesus as *ho kyrios* and God as *ho kyrios* as interchangeable. It should therefore be expected that *ho kyrios* in 8a refers to ‘the LORD’ or at the very least a hypo-diegetic character who is a figure for the Lord of the primary diegesis. Luke 18:6 offers a particularly useful analogy, where unmistakably it is Jesus who steps in to comment on the parable of the Unjust Judge:

> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, `Vindicate me against my adversary.' For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, `Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" And *the Lord* said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night?” (Luke 18:2-7)

In this example, the extra-diegetic Lord terminates the parable and his judgment stands as the boundary of the parable in a similar manner to that which occurs in 16:8a. Luke is exceptionally consistent in his use of *ho kyrios* and 16:8a and 18:6 are certainly not the only occasions when the judgement of *ho kyrios* is used to bookend an embedded parable. Indeed Luke’s employment of the term *Kyrios* is particularly polysemous (certainly more than is the case in Mark or Matthew) and each parable

in Luke that talks of 'a master' also has at its diegetic threshold the overt presence of 'the master.'[55]

Stewards vs. Servants

Luke's Gospel contains five parables in which domestic servants (*douloi or oikonimos*) figure prominently: the doorkeeper (*douloi,* Luke 12:35-38); the overseer (*oikonimos,* Luke 12:42-46); the dishonest steward (*oikonimos,* Luke 16:1-8); the talents (*doulos,* Luke 19:12-27) and the servant's reward (*douloi,* Luke 17:7-10).[56] Matthew records four (including one unique example: the unmerciful servant, 18:23-28) and Mark records just two. Three of Luke's parables are unique to his text (the throne claimant, the servant's reward and the dishonest steward). John D. Crossan adjudged the "servant parables" to form "thematic unity" focused on the master-servant relationship within which a critical moment of tension reveals an unexpected truth.[57] Crossan suggested that 'servanthood' was a key motif in early ecclesiology and discipleship and that the parables functioned cumulatively to reinforce a clear "superior-subordinate" dichotomy. This model, suggested Crossan, was intended to reinforce a sense of discipleship in the service of the Lord.

To illustrate the centrality of the superior-subordinate axis, Crossan, and more recently Beavis, have both appealed to the parable of the servant's reward in Luke 17:7-10 as an illustration of the normative relationship between master and servant in Gospel parables:

[55] Cf. C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke*, Vol. 139 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), p. 151–55.
[56] Crossan includes two more in this list, that of the throne claimant and the wicked tenants, but as the former is indistinguishable in the received text from the parable of the tenants into which it may be embedded, and as the later refers to the tenants as *farmers* I exclude both. Cf. Crossan, *In Parables,* pp. 96-120.
[57] Ibid., p. 120; idem., 'The Servant Parables of Jesus', *Semeia 1* (1974), pp. 17-32.

> Will any one of you, who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, `Come at once and sit down at table'? Will he not rather say to him, `Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, `We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty (Luke 17:7-10).

In Crossan's view, this surprising parable is an example of Jesus deliberately using the well-known Greco-Roman social norms governing relationships between servants and masters to contradict the "horizon of expected normalcy", for his tale shows that, contrary to expectations, "even good servants are not rewarded."[58] As the most common contemporary stories about servants placed them in the role of 'the clever slave', it is possible that Jesus here once again surprises his audience by inverting social expectations.[59] In Crossan's model Jesus does this by undermining any clear sense of causality between what might be 'socially acceptable virtuous behaviour' and expected divine reward. Crossan reads the dishonest steward (as well as the un-merciful servant, the wicked tenants and the vineyard workers) in the same light, suggesting they are parabolic illustrations of the counter-cultural nature of God's judgement or grace.

Crossan's emphasis on the unexpected nature of the servant/master relationship is useful and it is appropriate to note that the dishonest steward is one of a number of servants who do not get what they deserve, or who do get what they do not deserve. Nevertheless I would not emphasise the unity of the servant parables. This is because the surprise verdict often declared in these parables is far from unique to servant parables. Indeed a great number of Jesus' teachings intentionally

[58] Crossan, *In parables*, p. 104. See also *idem, How to read the Bible and still be a Christian: Struggling with divine violence from Genesis through Revelation* (London: Harper Collins, 2015). Here Crossan suggests: "recognize radicality's assertion, expect normalcy's subversion, and respect the honesty of a story that tells the truth" (p. 98).

[59] Cf. Kathleen McCarthy, *Slaves, masters, and the art of authority in Plautine comedy* (Princeton University Press, 2009): "The literary mode that replicates the authoritative structures of real life, and the literary mode that reverses those structures [both] have pleasures to offer [audiences]" (p. 29).

challenge the theological and socio-economic presumptions of his audience. This has been described as one of Jesus' axiomatic rhetorical tools.[60] There is an abundance of examples, including the parables of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:10-14), the story of the widow's two mites (Luke 21:1-4).

Evidently the surprise reversal of expectations is not a unifying factor that applies only to the servant parables. Equally there is no more unifying form in the construction or characterisation of servant parables than there is in 'agricultural parables' or 'building parables' or 'banquet parables'. In some servant parables there are good servants and ungrateful masters (Luke 17:7-10), in others there are bad servants and forgiving masters (Matthew 18:21-35). Thus whilst Crossan is right that servant parables "share a thematic unity concerning a master-servant relationship and a moment of critical reckoning therein," such a conclusion is actually little more than a truism: parables about servants are all parables about servants.[61] It seems improbable therefore, despite Crossan's analysis, that the parable of the dishonest steward ultimately finds its meaning in reference to other parables about servants.

Rich Men

If the master who praises the steward is actually Jesus and not the steward's own master it is natural to ask if Jesus' praise is in contrast to the response that might be expected from this hypo-diegetic rich man of 16:1. Fletcher concludes on this matter that "the steward has been commended for acting wisely, whether this is by his master or by Jesus himself does not matter too much."[62] However, I would argue that if the master of 8a is Jesus, it becomes distinctly possible that his commendation of

[60] Cf. William R. Herzog II, *Parables as subversive speech: Jesus as pedagogue of the oppressed*, (Westminster, John Knox Press, 1994).
[61] Crossan, *In parables*, p. 96. Crossan fails to distinguish between hired managers, indentured servants and slaves. The variety between these roles would significantly affect the audience's perception of the status of the rich man's oikonomos.
[62] Fletcher, *The Riddle*, p.17

the steward is offered in direct opposition to the judgement expected from the mouth of the rich man, and that this is the very purpose of the parable. This notion is supported by scrutiny of the cases in Luke's gospel where we encounter the adjective 'rich.'

In every other instance in Luke's Gospel the term '*plousios'* carries distinctly negative connotations. There are seven other pericopae containing the term. In 6:24 Jesus pronounces 'woe' on those who are 'rich'; in 12:16 Jesus tells the parable of 'a certain rich man' who turns out to be a fool; in 14:12 Jesus' listeners are enjoined not to invite 'rich' neighbours to dinner; in 16:19-22 Jesus tells of the 'rich man' who ignores his neighbour Lazarus; in 18:23-25 a 'rich young man' is disappointed because his wealth prevents him following God; in 19:2 Zacchaeus, 'a sinner' is introduced as a 'rich' chief tax collector and in 21:1 the 'rich' in the temple treasury are criticised for giving little out of their abundance.[63] Separately there are other wealthy characters in the Gospel such as the feast-giver of 14:16 and the nobleman of 19:12 who are evidently affluent but are not described as "rich". Neither of these characters are condemned or cast negatively, which suggests that quite possibly in Luke's parlance the term 'rich' implies more about an individual's management of wealth than their net-worth: being wealthy is not sinful, but being 'rich' is shorthand for character sketches of those who through their selfish miserliness resist God's call to generosity. A number of commentators draw similar conclusions. Bernard B. Scott, for example, suggests that the notion of a "rich man" is part of the "repertoire

[63] Zaccheus' wealth fits in fundamentally with the notion that to be *plousios* is to live in counterpoint to the way of Christ, though nevertheless capable of redemption. He is a "a chief tax collector, and rich" but after his declaration "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold," he is included in the community of Christ. This re-affirms Luke's model, for the role of tax collector is not in opposition to the call of Christ, but fraudulent or selfish wealth must be relinquished by disciples.

of social expectation" employed by Luke.[64] Landry and May note that superfluous use of the adjective 'rich' is "probably [employed] to increase the hearer's antipathy toward this character [as] in most such stories the rich man is cast in the role of the villain."[65] John Lygre also suggests that Luke's audience would presume that "anyone who gets ahead is thought to have done so at the expense of everyone else."[66]

I see no reason to disagree with Scott, Lygre or Landry and May. Luke's use of the adjective *plousios* is self-evidently pleonastic (given the social status and wealth revealed in the rest of the story) but is utilised because of the significant negative connotation it conveys and to avoid any straightforward association between the steward's master and the Master. It suggests that Jesus' praise of the steward's wisdom is not only a simple tale about wisdom and preparation for the eschaton, but also about how such wisdom rests in stark contrast to those whose selfish wealth at first appears perfectly righteous. Tacitly Jesus' praise of the steward stands in significant contrast to his attitude towards the rich man. Even though the rich man performs no obvious or active wrong in the foreground of the story he still remains a figure who is outside the Kingdom, as through Luke's Gospel, the rich and the poor fall on either side of the coming judgment, with the poor vindicated and the rich thrown out.[67]

If the master of 8a is the 'rich man', in the act of praising his steward this 'rich man' must have made a unique movement away from the typos of other rich men;

[64] Bernard B. Scott, 'A Master's Praise: Luke 16, 1-8a', *Biblica 64*, no. 2 (1983), pp. 173-188 (p. 180).
[65] David Landry and Ben May, 'Honor Restored', p. 295.
[66] John G. Lygre, 'Of What Charges? (Luke 16:1-2)', *Biblical Theological Review 32*, no. 1 (2002), pp. 21-28. The observation is originally made by Douglas Oakman in a broader Palestinian context but applied to this particular parable by Lygre. Cf. Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the peasants*, Vol. 4 (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), p. 60.
[67] Cf. Halvor Moxnes, *The economy of the kingdom: Social conflict and economic relations in Luke's Gospel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004).

for the master's praise in 8a is offered as a true, proper and divine judgement. However, there are no grounds at all for this reading, either within the text or in the suggestion of any interpreters. It cannot be established therefore that through the act of praising the steward the rich man was somehow redeemed from his miserliness and it consequently seems most unlikely that there could be direct correspondence between the hypo-diegetic 'rich' master and the right judgement of the 'master' who praises the steward. The 'master' who praises the steward should therefore be seen as offering a contrasting judgement to that expected by a typical 'rich' man and the commendation of the steward's shrewdness should be understood as coming from Jesus, the real *kyrios*.

2.2 The primacy of shrewdness in connecting parables

There are a number of adjacent or thematically similar parables that are sometimes used to help contextualise the parable of the dishonest steward. These include a range of servant parables (explored above), parables related by the motif of houses and most persuasively, parables of wisdom and foolishness including the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Rich man and Lazarus and that of the Rich Fool.[68]

The Prodigal Son

Michael R. Austin (1985) suggested that the parable of the prodigal son should more accurately be called "the parable of the Hypocritical Son" and that the story of the dishonest steward might better be called the "prodigal servant."[69] He suggested that these two parables functioned as a pair. He noted that the story of the prodigal's return was not comparable with the tale of the lost coin or sheep, but rather, hinged

[68] Regarding the significance of houses see C.E. Bowen's unpersuasive attempt to group five parables around the motif of houses and the ironic use of eternal tents. C. Edward Bowen, 'The Parable of the Unjust Steward: Oikos as the Interpretative Key', *The Expository Times 111*, no. 9 (2000), pp. 314-315.

[69] Michael R. Austin, 'The Hypocritical Son.' *Evangelical Quarterly 57,* no. 3 (1985), pp. 307-15 (p. 311).

on the reaction of the older brother to the prodigality of the younger brother and his father's grace. He suggested that the significance of unexpected grace was the first of several connections between the circumstances of the younger son and those of the steward:

> In both stories there has been reckless waste by one man of another man's property: the younger son of his father's wealth (his 'living', 15:12) and the servant of the rich man's wealth (his 'goods', 16:1)... Another point of similarity between the two stories is that a turning point is reached in each when the younger son 'came to himself and said ... ' (15:17) and the servant 'said to himself…' (16:3). That a similar moment of self-awareness following an identical action should be described in such similar ways within an almost identical grammatical and syntactical construction in parables which stand together and which occur in only one Gospel cannot possibly be explained as a chance occurrence.[70]

In Austin's view the two parables are not accidentally adjacent but function together as a challenge to the judgmental nature of the Pharisees who fail to acknowledge their own self-interest and are thus surprised by the profligate forgiveness and praise shown by the father/master in the two parables. Austin is not alone in this reading although his view has been moderated somewhat. John Kilgallen (1997) reiterated the parallels suggesting that the two parables together accentuate the need for shrewdness:

> Jesus's major, indeed single emphasis [in these two parables], is the praise of that shrewdness which matches means to end. This likeness in prudence, between the Son and the Steward… explains why these two people, Son and Steward, were joined in sequence.[71]

The Rich man and Lazarus

David Bidnell (2011) and J.Y. Jeong (2011) have also emphasised the linguistic similarities and the equally provocative conclusions in the parables of the dishonest steward and the prodigal son, whilst also noting further connections between these

[70] *Loc. cit.*
[71] John J. Kilgallen, 'Luke 15 and 16: a Connection." *Biblica 78*, no. 3 (1997), pp. 369-376 (p. 373).

two parables and the story of the Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31).[72] This story does not share the same depth of correspondence found between the prodigal son and the unjust steward. There is no profligacy, no sudden realisation and no unexpected reversal of fortune. Nevertheless, positioned immediately after the parable of the unjust steward this parable further legitimates the sense that criticism of miserliness and a challenge towards appropriate use of resources are central to a potential triptych of stories that sketch the divine verdict regarding unacceptable abundance. The overlap of themes also supports the basic conclusion that the parable of the unjust steward is not accidentally located in its Lucan context. Jeong's conclusion therefore seems appropriate:

> A common theme clearly comes to the surface in all three parables… Each character in three parables is recklessly prodigal with property for their own self-contentment, regardless of its ownership. Their covetousness toward possessions eventually causes them to fall into a predicament.[73]

Wealth, squandering, regret and unexpected grace mark all three stories and each hinges on the contrast between foolishness and wisdom. It is noteworthy that the three stories are adjacent and that all three parables are unique to Luke.

The Rich Fool

In a recent article, R. Daniel Schumacher has departed from the view which connects a number of the parables in chapters 15 and 16 and has instead highlighted the connections between the parable of the dishonest steward and that of the rich fool (12:16-21). He posits three key reasons why he believes that these two parables should be seen as singular companion parables. Firstly he notes that both parables share four acts or "movements": (1) Introduction of primary characters

[72] David Roger Bidnell, *A cultural-literary reading of Luke's Parables* (University of Birmingham PhD diss., 2012) p. 191. Jeong, *The role of the Lukan parables*, p. 59.
[73] Ibid., p. 62.

(12:16 and 16:1); (2) Crisis of event which sets story in motion (12:16 and 16:1); (3) Inner monologue of primary character responding to the dilemma or opportunity before them (12:17 and 16:3-7); (4) A surprising proclamation (12:20 and 16:8).[74] Secondly he asserts a strong lexical similarity between the two parables. Both begin with the phrase, "a certain man" whom both introduce as "rich." In both the main character enters into a soliloquy with the words "what shall I do" (12:17 and 16:3), the rich man is a fool (*aphron*), whilst the steward is wise (*phronimos*). Thirdly both parables reverse the logical conclusion. Logic dictates that the rich man of 12 is recognized as acting wisely and the steward of 16 as acting foolishly, but this is the opposite of the judgement pronounced by God. The rich man should be praised for his prudence, and the steward should be condemned for cheating: instead, the rich man is condemned for prudence and the steward is praised for cheating!

Schumacher, and before him Halvor Moxnes, both conclude that the condemnation of the Rich man in 12:19 is not because he had done anything morally wrong in accruing his fortune, after all his actions are similar to Joseph's in Genesis 41. However, his invitation to "eat, drink and be merry" (12:19) is directed solely to himself and is therefore an illustration of his selfishness.[75] Thus in Schumacher's scheme the dishonest steward is a counterpart to the Rich Fool because one stored up and one scattered. Both were selfish, but the scatterer is praised for his wisdom, whilst the one who stored up is accused of foolishness. This is because the steward's distribution of wealth is an imitation of the profligacy of God, whilst the Rich Fool uses wealth to benefit no-one but himself.[76] Literally the steward's

[74] Schumacher, 'Saving like a Fool', p. 269.
[75] Halvor Moxnes, 'Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts', in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. by Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 241-68.
[76] Schumacher, 'Saving like a Fool', p. 274.

distribution is a 'scattering' (*diaskorpizo*), a term Schumacher suggests is only elsewhere found in Luke in *The Magnificat*, which refers to the 'scattering' of the proud and "the rich being sent empty away" (Luke 1:51).[77]

Schumacher's commentary is useful. Certainly the counterpoint between the unexpected condemnation of the rich man's lack of wisdom (*aphron*) and the implausible praise of the steward's shrewdness (*phronimos*) is a meaningful context in which to place the parable. However, the structural similarity is limited and applies almost equally to the majority of Luke's parables; the common lexical connections are narrow and, crucially, Schumacher's attention to the steward's distribution of wealth is misplaced. The Steward is not praised for 'scattering', rather he is praised for 'prudence' (16:8). Indeed, his master's original condemnation for wasteful scattering is never contested or reversed. In fact the parable depends on the fact that the accusation of wastefulness in 16:1 ("charges were brought to him that [his steward] was wasting (*diaskorpizo*) his goods") is both true and worth the dismissal of the steward. Consequently it is not valid to suggest that the steward is praised because he scattered his master's wealth in counterpoint to the contemptible 'storing' (*sunnaxo*) of the rich man in 12:18.

Summary

The range of connections between the prodigal son and the dishonest steward and their place next to each other reveals that Luke saw the prodigious confusing generosity of God as sharply contrasting with the attitudes toward wealth and

[77] Though Schumacher seems to have missed 15:13, as cited above by Austin. Schumacher says, "The only other occurrence of diaskorpizon in Luke is in the Magnificat" ('Saving like a Fool', p. 274). Austin's analysis is more accurate: "It is very instructive that only twice in the N.T. is the verb diaskorpizein ('to scatter' or 'to disperse') used metaphorically in the sense of 'to squander' or 'to waste': once in the parable of The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:13) and once in the parable of The Unjust Steward (Lk. 16:1). One might say that we have here two stories about prodigality – The Prodigal Son and The Prodigal Servant." Michael R. Austin, 'The Hypocritical Son', p. 312.

judgement amongst the religious population of his day. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus also provides a significant parallel through character study of an apparently righteous individuals who is proved foolish, in stark contrast to the laudable wisdom of the unrighteous steward who, under duress and to preserve self-interest, acts shrewdly. The story of the rich fool also builds on this motif, though with less direct connection or lexical overlap. This nexus of themes covers overlapping and contrasting key Lucan vocabulary for wisdom, foolishness, shrewdness, riches, scattering, this age and eternity and is arguably a much fuller theological context than a monochrome typological relationship between the servant/master and disciple/Lord.[78] Certainly if we read the praise of the steward as a commendation delivered by Jesus rather than the rich man then the parable of the dishonest manager is fully consistent with Luke's other usage role models of selfish wealth and unexpected wisdom. Thus, in some sense the relationship between servant and his 'rich' master is a parabolic façade from behind which, through the judgement of *ho kyrios*, a much greater depth of overlapping and unexpected meanings emerge.

There is not enough evidence to posit intentional singular or primary interplay between the parables of the dishonest servant and the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus or rich fool and it cannot easily be asserted that the similarities between any of these represent a deliberate or unique relationship between the parables. Nevertheless themes of surprising divine verdict, the role of foolishness/prudence, wealth/squandering and the divine pronouncement of judgment certainly justify claims that there is a degree of affinity between these parables. Consequently the verdict of 8a should be interpreted in light of the connections between wisdom and wealth that it shares with its immediate neighbours and it is reasonable to conclude

[78] Cf. Kyoun-Jin Kim, 'Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology', *Tyndale Bulletin 44* no. 2 (1993), p. 385.

that the verdict of 8a should be understood as praise from *ho kyrios* who wishes to highlight the value of shrewdness, even through the story of a dishonest man.

2.3 Contemporaneous Context

Whilst Luke's own world of parables provide ample thematic background through which to understand the vocabulary and theological significance of the parable of the dishonest steward, ancient Greek tales of shrewd servants and contemporaneous Jewish middoth both also provide further context for understanding the parable.

Outsmarting the Boss

The motif of a servant outwitting his master was a popular theme in ancient near eastern stories and was addressed in detail by Roman writers. A notable example comes from Herodotus in *Histories II.122*. He records that Rhampsinitus (identified with Ramses III century, who reigned from 1182-1151 BC) was outwitted four times by the son of a stone mason. This young man stole from King Rhampsinitus three times, evaded traps, rescued the body of his brother and tricked the King's daughter. Herodotus wrote,

> Now when this also was reported to the king, he was at first amazed at the ready invention and daring of the fellow, and then afterwards he sent round to all the cities and made proclamation granting a free pardon to the thief, and also promising a great reward if he would come into his presence. (*Histories II.121*)

In this story Herodotus' reader is invited to share the marvel of the Pharaoh and view the stone mason's son as a worthy suitor for Rhampsinitus' daughter by virtue of his shrewdness and cunning. Similar tales are found in the Life of Aesop (in which Aesop escapes a false accusation through inducing vomit) and in Plautus' comedies which consistently employ the figure of the cunning servants to comedic or dramatic

effect.[79] In one famous example in the comedy *Pseudolus* for example the rich master (Simo) eulogizes his crafty slave (Pseudolous) for getting him out of trouble:

> *Simo:* Now what I'm going to do is to prepare a reception for [the chief slave] Pseudolus - oh, no, not the kind of reception you have seen in many another comedy, a reception with whips and irons. No… I'm going to bring out that two thousand drachmas which I promised to give him... By gad, he's the cleverest, craftiest, wickedest creature alive! The trick that took Troy, and all the wiles of Ulysses, are nothing to what Pseudolus can do! (*Pseudolus*)

Mary Ann Beavis asserts that a Greco-Roman audience would have been very familiar with the Greco-Roman literary tradition of the picaresque slave, typified in the Life of Aesop and would be unsurprised by an amusing tale of a slave's revenge, trickery or trouble.[80] She suggests that, "although the Plautine *servi callidi* often evade the dreadful punishments that threaten them, it is important to note that Greco-Roman audiences regarded as hilarious the spectacle of a slave facing dire threats of extravagant torture."[81] In these circumstances she suggests that the drama was often structured to ensure that the servant's escape turned the pomp of the master into a comic spectacle. Erich Segal makes a similar observation. He notes the drama found in texts recalling a remarkable range of tortures threatened to slaves, including iron chains, hot tar, burning clothes, restraining collars, the rack, the pillory and the mill, but suggests that whilst the dire threat effects dramatic tension, the spectacle of the slave or servant rescuing his master was considered even more dramatic and enjoyable. "The most common dilemma presented is that of

[79] At the appointed hour the master came from his bath and dinner with his mouth all set for figs. He said, "Agathopous, give me the figs" The master, seeing that he was cheated for all his pains and learning that Aesop had eaten the figs, said, "Somebody call Aesop'… having proven his point through his resourcefulness, [Aesop] asked that his fellow slaves do the same thing so that they might find out who it was that had eaten the figs…As soon as they drank the warm water, the figs, now mixed with bile, rose up, and they no sooner removed their fingers than out came the figs. And so the servants got their beating and learned a good lesson to the effect that when you scheme up trouble for someone else, the first thing you know, you are bringing the trouble on yourself. (Life of Aesop 3)

[80] Mary Ann Beavis, 'Ancient slavery as an interpretive context for the New Testament servant parables with special reference to the unjust steward (Luke 16: 1-8)', *Journal of Biblical Literature 111*, no. 1 (1992), pp. 37-54 (p. 50).

[81] Ibid., p. 43.

a young man who is in love and insolvent and who turns to his clever slave for salvation."[82]

It is reasonable to note the degree of similarity in plot between the typical tales of cunning slaves and the parable of the dishonest steward: (1) the servant is in trouble with his master; (2) the servant takes action to remedy the situation; (3) the servant escapes threat and outwits his master. Beavis concludes, "The parable thus conforms closely to the expectations of an ancient audience acquainted with stories in which clever servants, like Aesop and the steward, get the better of their masters."[83] This rudimentary correspondence between the parable and the phenomenal range of Greco-Roman tales leads Rene Baergen to argue that the 'concrete' relations of Roman masters and their managerial slaves provides a background which, when undermined by Jesus' parabolic scenarios, reveals the depth of his social iconoclasm: "This parable of a rich man and his ingenious slave would appear to encode and overturn the conflictual reality of powerful elite and powerless non-elite experienced by its first-century audience."[84] This is an overstatement, as the typos of the *servi callidi* was well understood, Jesus does not promote the steward's behaviour as a model of what his disciples should do to overcome injustice, and there is no evidence that Jesus' parable was intended, or was used, to challenge societal structures. To the contrary, Jesus uses the familiar motif of a slave outsmarting his master to create an unexpected illustration of the significance of shrewdness.

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[82] Erich Segal, *Roman laughter: The comedy of Plautus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) p. 15.
[83] Beavis, 'Ancient slavery', p. 47.
[84] Baergen, 'Servant, manager or slave', p. 12. I disagree with Baergen and would discount the status of the steward as an important clue toward the meaning of the parable: Luke's Jesus uses frequent examples of stewards, servants and slaves, and their diverse roles are employed to contrasting effect in different tales.

Commentators who highlight the significance of the Greco-Roman literature on *oikonomos* essentially reveal one common conclusion: in any tale of a slave or servant outsmarting their master, whether this motif is employed for dramatic or comic effect, the slave is the victor and his own shrewdness invites justifiable praise from the audience at some level.[85] Thus, judging from the contemporaneous context, it is quite probable that the master of 16:8a is Jesus. Background literature suggests that whilst it is possible for a steward's master to begrudgingly praise his cunning, it is more common still for the audience to be guided toward praise of the picaresque servant at comic cost to his master. The voice of praise in 8a is therefore best understood as Jesus, who speaks as narrator to his primary diegetic audience and to the extra-diegetic reader to praise the steward because he displayed a wisdom lacked by his master or by the disciples. The Greco-Roman context adds weight to the notion that the master's praise is Jesus' verdict at the expense of the rich man, pronounced as an unexpected interruption of the hypo-diegetic world to challenge audiences toward a shrewd prodigality. This is hardly a teaching of revolutionary iconoclasm, but it may, nevertheless, illustrate Jesus' willingness to confound expectation regarding the relationship between shrewdness and prodigality.

Qal Wahomer

One of Jesus' consistent teaching methods or exegetical principles (*middoth*) seems to be the application a rabbinic technique known as '*qal wahomer*' which broadly means 'from the lesser to the greater' (*a minori ad maius* in Latin). [86] This technique was supposedly one of the distinctive features of first century Pharisaic Judaism and

[85] Francesca Schironi, 'The Cunning Slave from Plautus to Commedia dell'Arte', in *Ancient Comedy and Reception,* ed. by S. Douglas Olson (New York: de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 447 – 478 (p. 454).
[86] Louis Jacobs, 'Hermeneutics', *Encyclopaedia Judaica 2* (1971), pp. 25-29 (p. 27).

was the first rule of both Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Ishmael.[87] A number of typical examples of this method are found across synoptic gospels.

> Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! (Luke 12:24)
>
> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:9-11)

In both of these instances there is overt movement from a small example to a significant principle, effected through the correlative pronoun in the construct *posos mallon* ('how much more') which occurs ten times in the New Testament. Of these three are in Matthew (7:11 above, 10:25 and 12:12), three are in Luke (11:13; 12:24 above and 12:28), two are in Romans (11:12; 11:24) and two are in Hebrews (9:14, 10:29). These are not the only occasions of argument from minor to major, but they represent the most overt occurrences. A significant number of other examples occur in Luke's Gospel less explicitly, as exemplified below:

> If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:20)
>
> Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? (Luke 13:15-16)
>
> Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. (Luke 18:7-8)

In each of these instances Jesus suggests that as one proposition is true because of an underlying principle, it necessarily follows that the same principle will be applied

[87] David Daube, 'Rabbinic methods of interpretation and Hellenistic rhetoric', *Hebrew Union College Annual 22* (1949), pp. 239-264 (p. 244).

on a larger scale.[88] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, has suggested that every *Qal wahomer* is made of three logical propositions: two premises and one conclusion:

> The first premise states that two things, A and B, stand to each other in the relation of minor and major importance. The second premise states that with one of these two things, A, a certain permissive law applies. The conclusion is that the same law is applicable to the other thing, B.[89]

A number of scholars have posited that this same technique arises in diverse synoptic parables, but given the significant frequency of overt indices of *qal wahomer* in Luke's gospel, it is surprising that a more complete survey of the technique in Luke has not been undertaken. Nevertheless Gächter is one scholar who comes to the conclusion that in Luke 16 Jesus challenges his disciples to learn from the example of the dishonest steward.

> Jesus brings home to his disciples how much more than the steward they should detach themselves from riches, apply it to their brethren in need, and thus secure for themselves an eternal reward. This is the natural end to a perfect parable.[90]

This argument has not been significantly commented on since Gächter wrote in 1950. My interpretation of the meaning of the parable is somewhat different from Gächter's but I would nevertheless agree with his analysis that the parable represents a clear instance *of qal wahomer* through which Jesus reasons as follows:

> If a steward, facing immanent judgement for his inappropriate use of resources, realises he needs to act shrewdly, how much more must it follow that 'children of light' who know they face immanent divine judgement ought to act shrewdly.

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[88] Cf. Linda King who suggests that often "Jesus intentionally provoked controversy in order to raise the issue of what was really most important, which he does with skilful qal wahomer. [In the parable of the Lost sheep for example] rather than answer immediately, Jesus turns the tables on his interlocutors. "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?" Linda King, 'Jesus argued like a Jew', *Leaven 19,* no. 2, (2011), pp. 74-79 (p. 77).

[89] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Rabbinic Perspectives on the New Testament* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 21-22.

[90] Gächter, 'The Parable of the Dishonest Steward', p. 131.

2.4 Examples of Metalepsis in Luke

Hypo-diegetic narrative in Luke's Gospel is sometimes constructed so as to offer unavoidable theological resonance that is directed toward the extra-diegetic audience.[91] This is particularly noticeable when characters within parables function in tension with their counterparts in the primary diegesis or when key terms are repeated across each level resulting in metonymic confusion. Both of these elements have the capacity to obscure precisely who is being addressed by whom.[92] This is exactly the effect highlighted by William Nelles, who has suggested that, "the interpenetration or overlapping of levels forces the reader to make other connections between the characters and worlds of different levels."[93] Tellingly, the most significant examples of this phenomenon in Luke's Gospel are all unique to Luke.

Luke 16:31 describes a moment in which Jesus, who is telling a parable, puts into the mouth of Abraham an anticipation of Jesus' own resurrection:

> But Abraham said, `They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, `No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, `If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' (Luke 16:29-31)

This pericope represents a definite slippage between Luke's message to his readers, Jesus' message to the Pharisees and Abraham's message to the deceased and tormented rich man within the parable. Nominally Abraham is making a point to the deceased protagonist within the confines of the parable's dialogue, but what is actually being pronounced functions at a level of discourse two layers removed from that of the parable. Luke enables his readers to feel as though Jesus is addressing

[91] "Metalepsis in Luke leads the audience to seek meaning by making recourse to another level of discourse in order to render the narrative meaningful." Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 278.
[92] Ibid., p. 272.
[93] William Nelles, *Stories Within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), p. 351.

them and his own audience, allowing the rhetoric within the embedded discourse to escape the boundary of the parable. This muddling of diegetic thresholds is aimed toward the amplification of an eschatological warning and the rich man is employed to add urgency to the post-resurrection context of the audience. The eschatological context may be of no significance but it is notable that a similar movement occurs in other eschatological pericopae. For example, when Jesus is asked, “Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me,” he replies with the parable of the Rich Fool. This story concludes with another direct appeal that cuts through diegetic layers.

> God said to him, `Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:13).

Here the voice of God intrudes into the hypo-diegetic level to castigate the rich fool but his voice also speaks at the primary diegetic level as an answer to the brother requesting arbitration. Even the extra-diegetic audience hears the warning and God is revealed to be an omni-diegetic presence, whose word applies equally across each narrative plane.

Given the imminence of the eschaton in Luke’s schema it is unsurprising that an urgency of outlook pervades his Gospel or that other parables also demonstrate diegetic transgression that conveys eschatological urgency. Whilst the eschatological crux in each of the parables above may be relevant to Jesus’ audience in the world of the primary diegesis, their resolution and warning strains the distinction between diegetic levels and suggests that Luke consistently has in mind multiple layers of audience. A further significant example of this movement from the hypo-diegetic to the extra-diegetic audience is identified by C. Kavin Rowe in the parable of the faithful steward (Luke 12:41-48). This too focuses on an eschatological warning more relevant to Luke’s readers than Jesus’ hearers:

> But if that servant says to himself, `My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful (Luke 12:41-46).

The significant metaleptic movement within this parable is that the master's punishment muddles a hypo-diegetic action, "he will punish him", and an entirely distinct extra-diegetic eschatological action, "and put him with the unfaithful." Here, in one sentence, the action of the Lord and the world of an embedded narrative occupy the same frame, and the threshold between levels has been fully contaminated.

In some ways this example is more obvious than others because of the metonymy it contains around the Lord. Rowe has suggested that Jesus' frequent description of the master of the household in this parable (and the subsequent dialogue) as "Lord" is unnecessarily repetitive.[94] It is natural for Peter to say to Jesus, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" (12:41) and equally natural for the narrative to record, "and the Lord replied…" However, in a parable about a homeowner (*oikodespotés*) there is absolutely no need for the 'homeowner' to be morphed into the 'Lord' (*kyrios)*. The same must be true of the 'rich man' of 16:1. It seems then, that Luke uses 'Lord' very loosely as an appellation so that even homeowners and rich men may suddenly be described this way in times when their own actions provoke interesting contrasts or parallels with the action of 'the LORD'. This process also occurs in the parable of the narrow door. Here, as Schellenberg says, "two parallel scenarios—the embedded householder's reckoning and the judgment of the Son of Man—intermingle freely, illuminating the analogy between them."[95]

[94] Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, p. 203.
[95] Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 270.

David Hermon has identified these lexical repetitions as a strong measure of metalepsis, suggesting that utilisation of repeated vocabulary items across different frames preconfigures the text for threshold transgression.[96] On this basis I would suggest that parables that have sometimes been dismissed as confused allegory should actually be seen as urgent eschatological tropes in which Luke intentionally employs confusing metonymy and diegetic ambiguation. This notion is also expressed by Ryan Schellenberg who has said of these parables that their narratives invite the audience to consider how Luke's story of Jesus and Jesus' embedded stories are mutually interpretive:

> Intrusion into the embedded narrative of material that is not readily comprehensible… [forces] the audience to make recourse to another level of discourse.[97]

I contend therefore that the lexical overlap between diegetic thresholds should be seen as demonstration of the intentional permeability within Luke's layers of story-telling. Whilst the frequent overlap between narrative levels is normally subtle and rarely distorts the shape of the story world, it often achieves the effect of adding urgency to an understanding of the immanence of the eschaton.[98] In many ways, the art of Luke's use of embedded narrative is that his careful framing distinguishes a coherent set of hypo-diegetic, parabolic worlds that are distinct from the world of the primary diegesis; but the action of God occurs across each diegetic world, and the fluidity and overlap of vocabulary allows surprising verdicts and eschatological warnings to "pop up" from the page and directly speak into the extra-diegetic context.

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[96] Herman, 'Toward a formal description', p.139.
[97] Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 272.
[98] The parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37) is noted by some as an appropriate example of Luke's capacity to shift between narrative levels subtly and coherently. Whilst inviting his audience to consider the idea of neighbourhood as a divine opportunity within the kingdom of God, Jesus also reaches out metaleptically to the reader. Cf. J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 426-32. Also Howard Pickett, 'Theatrical Samaritans: Performing Others in Luke 10:25-37', *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning vol. 11* (2012).

2.5 Jesus' verdict

The hypothesis that the voice of the master in verse 8a should be understood as that of Jesus is supported by the theological continuum that stretches across a range Lucan parables, lexical evidence from Luke's normal use of words, Greco-Roman stories of servants who outwit their masters and Jesus' use of the *qal wahomer* technique. Each supports the notion that Jesus truncates his hypo-diegetic tale to praise an act of shrewdness. Luke here contrasts the judgement of the steward's master with the judgement of the Master, the *kyrios* whose verdict consistently transgresses diegetic thresholds and transcends the normal boundaries of story worlds. The voice that praises the steward must be understood as that of Jesus whom Luke allows to confuse the threshold between diegetic worlds.

Interpreting 8a as a metaleptic moment makes sense of the parable of 16:1-7 and it also contributes significantly to understanding of the teachings that follow the parables in verses 9-15. The oddity of verse 9 is not entirely negated, but if it is accepted that Jesus praises the servant because his profligacy is so shrewd, then it seems that in 16:9 he may also be suggesting that it is not as foolish as it might seem to invest in earthly friendships and demonstrate reckless generosity with possessions. Jesus says, "I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations" (16:9). Here he is building upon the notion, illustrated by the parable, that the urgency and profligacy in this lifetime are a shrewd response to the anticipation of judgement. Whilst he highlights these themes, Jesus does not promote the steward's moral character, indeed in the subsequent verses he pointedly criticises dishonesty (*adikía*), the precise term he used to introduce the steward. He says, "He who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much"

(16:10). This criticism itself is a metaphor that Jesus then applies spiritually: “If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? (16:10-12). Faithfulness here both includes the steward’s generosity and excludes his dishonesty.

I contend that 16:7 is the terminus of the parable. In 8a Jesus truncates his tale, and Luke amplifies Jesus’ unexpected judgement through the ambiguity of *ho kyrios*, who traverses the boundary between the embedded and primary diegesis. Jesus’ praise calls for urgent shrewdness, after which he moves on to deliberate on a range of themes that have been raised by his parable: eternal judgement, faithfulness, stewardship, true riches and the incompatibility of competing masters.[99] His final conclusion is that, despite dubious behaviour it is the profligate steward rather than the rich man who is shrewd, because through his generosity he serves the purpose of the real *kyrios*.

> No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (16:13)

3. Hermeneutical Implications

3.1 Loose Threads

Jesus’ praise of the steward in Luke 16:8a curtails and ‘prematurely’ concludes the parable of the dishonest steward. The unfolding drama of the steward’s urgent response to his master’s demand leads the audience to expect a second scene in

[99] Contra Fletcher, who sees the discussion in 9-13 as unrelated to the parable. “When the parable was first retold perhaps all that was remembered was that Jesus had somehow commended the action of the dishonest steward.” Fletcher, *The Riddle*, p. 16.

which either he gets his comeuppance or he escapes disaster. However, this never happens and, moreover, the reasons for the unexpected judgement in the sudden interruption of 8a are never fully explained. Certainly the tension of the tale invites an expectation of resolution, and the surprise verdict invites some anticipation of meaningful elucidation. Nevertheless there is no narrative closure or completion, and the reader is left with a sense that the outcome of the story is actually unimportant. The success or otherwise of the steward's malfeasance, the verdict of the rich man and the response of the debtors is of no consequence to Jesus' tale. The parable receives no ending because though he began with "a certain rich man" his narrative is more of a character sketch than a drama. He is painting the picture of a man whose circumstances demand shrewd and immediate action. Any further detail might have made the steward's circumstances less analogous than those of Jesus' audience, rather than more: for though the need for urgent wisdom applies to the faithful, listening disciples gathered around Jesus, it is unlikely that the particularity of the steward's dishonesty does.

Jesus' point is to contrast the foolishness of those who are upright and self-righteous, but who act selfishly, with the wisdom of others who, regardless of motive, act urgently and shrewdly in the face of unavoidable judgment. The narrative strategy he employs to illustrate this message is unusual but it is not unique to this parable. Indeed, in a great many synoptic parables there is a lack of resolution regarding some strand of the hypo-diegetic plot. Whilst many parables themselves offer concrete and vivid images, the precise connections to the Kingdom of God, and the consequences for characters within the stories remain in doubt. Did the older brother eventually join the banquet for his prodigal sibling (Luke 15:32)? Did the injured traveller amass a prodigious debt for the Samaritan at the inn (Luke 10:35)?

How is the kingdom like a mustard seed (Luke 13:19)? Why are all the workers in the vineyard paid the same wage (Matthew 20:9)? Why are some of the bridesmaids shut out of the feast (Matthew 25:10)? The lack of development or resolution in each of these examples almost suggests that Jesus never wants his audience to get too engrossed in the hypo-diegetic world, the threshold of which is safeguarded by rapid return to the primary diegesis which achieves *Verfremdungseffekt.* "Glotzt nicht so romantisch," Jesus says, as though his ability as a rabbi is of more significance to the gospel writers than his aptitude as a story-teller and the impact of the tale is more important than its plot.

The closest comparable truncation to that observed in Luke 16:8a occurs in the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18.6 (mentioned above). Here, as with the parable of the dishonest steward, the audience is led to anticipate more than the cursory and begrudging response of the judge. But Jesus again interrupts before the audience discover what resolution the widow receives and again Jesus employs *qal wahomer* to explain the relevance of the sketch to his audience.[100]

The elliptical endings offered in a number of parables invite recognition that their primary purpose is not mimetic artistry but the solicitation of urgent response. These are undernourished fictive figures that "tease the hearer into active thought."[101] The parable poses a question with which the reader must struggle. As Richard Lischer comments:

> The New Testament itself is a collection of unresolved and sometimes chaotic episodes whose plot can only be completed by those who hear and retell them. "Go, tell your friends what God as done for you," Jesus says. We never

[100] Again there is significant debate about who exactly is speaking in 18:6b after the judgment of *o Kyrios*, but here, as the parable is about a supplicant/judge and not a servant/master, there can be no doubt that it is Jesus who interrupts himself and confuses the world of the hypo-diegetic supplicant and his disciples.
[101] Dodd, 'Parables of the Kingdom', p. 5.

> see them do that, for it is clear that we, the readers, are meant to perform the rest of the story.[102]

Here then it is evident that the readerliness demanded of Luke's audience is unrelenting. Even when Jesus is telling stories to his disciples it is Luke's audience who are invited to respond, and the loose threads of the hypo-diegesis mimic the status of every reader's life: ever unfinished and needful of completion.

3.2 Parabolic Collapse

In section 2.3 (above) I alluded to the strain placed on diegetic thresholds in Luke and also, particularly, to the work of C. Kavin Rowe in identifying moments of diegetic confusion. Rowe particularly focuses on the interplay between the *kyrios* in parables and outside of the parables, and suggests that the movement of this term across the diegetic thresholds has the effect of blending the narrative worlds:

> 'The story-world created by the narration of parables is intertwined with the Gospel narrative through the word *kyrios* as it is read on both levels, as "master" in the world of the parable, and as "Lord" along the allegorical lines that Luke so clearly provides.[103]

Schellenberg posits a similar depth of diegetic intertwining. He observes number of parables in which there is "free exchange of imagery from one narrative level to the other."[104] This is most overt in Luke 13, when in hypo-diegesis the master of the house pronounces extra-diegetic judgement:

> You will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. (Luke 13:28)

Eta Linnemann suggests that such confusion is accidental. She suggested that the process in these parables is one whereby the "reality part" invades the "picture part."

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[102] Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 118.
[103] Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, p. 154.
[104] Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 270.

> It cannot have been intended that in such a place the picture part and the reality part should fall together. For in that case the narrator would have given up the power of analogy and deprived the parable of the effect intended.[105]

Whilst Linneman sees the transgression between the narrative levels as diminishing the power of the parable, with Dallenbach, Nelles and Schellenberg, I draw the opposite conclusion. Luke's story of Jesus and Jesus' embedded stories are mutually interpretative and the threshold between them is deliberately permeable.[106] This may well deprive the parables of the fullness of the power of analogy, but this is no accident: Jesus does not want his characters to occupy a distinct, intact world and none of his parables develop beyond their embryonic expression. Luke does not allow them to develop as allegories and he does not try to extract metaphorical meaning from every letter or pen stroke (Matt. 5:18). Instead hypodiegetic tales abut the primary diegesis arising from it and augment it. The intentionality of this collision of 'picture part' and 'real part' is particularly evident in the unique manner in which Luke's Jesus creates a number of parables from his immediate situation, as though the world of his primary diegetic interactions and that of the hypo-diegetic parable were always permeable. Two occasions where Jesus creates direct verisimilitude between a parable or extended metaphor and a circumstance developing in his own diegetic level may suffice as evidence of this correspondence:

> And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. (Luke 5:33-35)

> Jesus said, "Simon, I have something to say to you… a certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:40-42)

[105] Eta Linnemann, *The parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 28.
[106] Cf. Nelles, 'Stories', p. 94 and Schellenberg, 'Which Master?' p. 272.

The other Gospels also include these interwoven episodes, and their treatment of the story of the anointing is especially interesting. The narrative frame around the parable is iterated in comparable form in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:1-8, but none of the other Gospels includes the embedded parable of the debtor (Luke 7:41-42). Luke's unique employment of a short parable thus reveals the particular fragility of diegetic thresholds in his Gospel, for Luke's Jesus is uniquely creative in the way he pulls strings of hypo-diegesis from his own circumstances in the primary diegetic world.

Given the wealth of interpenetration described between the world in which Jesus lived and the world of which he told, it would certainly be unsurprising for Luke to imply that a corresponding permeability exists across the threshold of the world 'in' which he told and the world 'of' which he told, i.e. between the world of his own audience and that of Jesus' audience, between the reader and the text. Like Duane Hanson's *Security Guard,* initially it is easy to mistake the level addressed by Luke's hypo-diegetic figures and the boundary between levels of representation remains opaque.

Luke's contamination of narrative layers is a provocative, muddling and significant strategy that allows both God as Judge and Jesus as Lord to speak across every narrative level. The Gospel claim is that Jesus' good news places demands upon every audience and that this necessitates the collapse of parabolic worlds and collision of diegetic levels. The subservience of hypo-diegetic figures therefore serves to illustrate the supremacy of the ultimate figure, the Christ, for whom all thresholds are permeable.

3.3 Mobius' Strip

The fluidity between narrative levels in the Lucan parables is much more notable than in Mark and Matthew. This is not to say that the other synoptic gospels do not imply omni-diegetic coherence, but rather that each gospel attempts to traverse the gap between Jesus' hearers and the gospel readers differently. Matthew, for example, adds explanatory commentary not found in Mark or Luke, a typical case being the inclusion of the uniquely detailed interpretation of the parable of the weeds. The absence of such explanations in Luke and Mark suggests that Matthew employs a more specific, directed and purposeful theology than the other synoptic texts, and that it is his intent to employ detail from the narrative world to explain the reader's world with only limited ambiguity. There are a number of characteristics in the way Matthew treats the thresholds between the hypo-diegetic and primary diegetic worlds that, through their absence in Luke, illustrate Luke's own relaxed approach to diegetic thresholds between narrative levels.

1. Matthew makes every effort to show that the world of the parables yields overt and direct meaning in the world of Jesus and his audience, a world that in turn is interpreted specifically to produce effect for Matthew's own audience.[107] For example the brief Matthean parable of the weeds is followed with lengthy explanation.
2. The narrative structure of Matthew's Gospel leads to the conclusion that the interpreter's present is the most significant time frame and it is almost as if Matthew views the extra-diegetic as real, the primary diegesis as an extension of

[107] Many examples highlight this Matthean emphasis. For example Matthew's use of 'the son of man' in 16:13 contrasts vividly with Luke's use of the first-person pronoun in the parallel version in Luke 9.18.

reality, and the hypo-diegesis as a servant of reality.[108] Thus narratological comments explicate events within the primary diegesis seeking to make their meaning in the extra-diegetic audience as plain as possible. For example, to justify the complexity and confusion of a number of paradoxical parables, Matthew explains that Jesus' parables themselves were a fulfilment of Psalm 78:2 ("I will open my mouth in parables").

3. Matthew clearly anticipates the relevance of Jesus' parables to his own audience, but he also employs many more strategies than Luke does to clearly demarcate the boundary of the hypo-diegesis and to accentuate the relevance of the parabolic world for his own extra-diegetic audience. Extended epithetical explanations and requests for explanation from characters in the primary diegesis are the most obvious devices. Examples include: "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field" (Matthew 13:36) and "Explain the parable to us" (Matthew 15:15)

Noting these simple strategies employed in Matthew highlights precisely the absence of such techniques in Luke's narrative and accentuates the fluidity between narrative thresholds that is found in Luke's Gospel. In Luke it is the characters themselves who act as figures for the world beyond the parable: without the close shepherding and detailed interpretations provided by Matthew, it is the extravagance of their behaviours and the nuance in their contexts which invite the reader to learn lessons from their lives. Luke sees no need to explain precisely the significance of each interaction, and includes more unresolved parables than Matthew as though he intends to maximise the figural interplay between worlds. Dominic Crossan has

[108] This is most obvious in Matthew's 'anachronistic' employment of ecclesia within Jesus' direct speech: "If your brother sins against you… [and] if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17).

elaborated this point in some detail, suggesting that in parables a reader is presented with "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."[109]

Luke is content to let diegetic toads hop in whichever garden they please, where Matthew is eager to ensure the toads stay in their rightful context and the fullness of their allegorical meaning is extrapolated in the real world. In addition Luke establishes Jesus as an overtly omni-diegetic operator who speaks homologously across textual surfaces. There is easy movement between the primary diegesis and hypo-diegesis at the threshold of numerous parables. Additionally the identity of the *kyrios* is consistently polysemous. Together these attest to the degree of omni-diegetic coherence within Luke's Gospel; a coherence that is alluded to by Luke in his prologue, as he describes the *things accomplished among us*:

> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you. (Luke 1:1-3)

Luke's model of reality is like a Mobius strip: an 'impossible space' that short circuits its own boundaries, removing the edge between inside and outside and suggesting an illogical surface. It is one continuous side that twists through 180 degrees and presents an unexpected and illogical anamorphism. There is a fluidity of orientation and an ambiguity about the diegetic thresholds in Luke's Gospel that suggest a similar confused continuity between the representational and the real.[110] The intrusion of the *kyrios* of the primary diegesis into the parables he tells renders the worlds of the Jesus and his hypo-diegetic characters mutually interpretative. This

[109] Crossan, *In Parables*, p. 15. Crossan quotes from Marianne Moore's 1935 poem, 'Poetry': Marianne Moore, *Complete poems* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 6.

[110] Robert Fowler adopts a similar analogy when looking at Markan movement between metaphor and irony and uncertainty and incongruity. Further, he cites the visual conundrums of M.C. Escher as a useful illustration of the Markan mode of discourse that "continually makes insiders of outsiders by making outsiders of insiders." Fowler, 'Let the Reader understand', p. 221.

interior hermeneutic suggests a complex sense of figure fulfilment that develops across narrative thresholds, rather than within distinct worlds. In turn this invites the extra-diegetic audience to imagine that the role of the *kyrios* may also find fulfilment beyond the narrative in their own world.

On every level, across every threshold and whichever way the loop is twisted, the master demands shrewd service from every listener. The parable of the dishonest steward is just one of the embedded narratives within Luke that implicates those outside of both the hypo-diegetic and extra-diegetic frames, not only as mutual witnesses with the narrator, but also as co-recipients of Jesus' challenge. Muddled diegetic frameworks diminish the reader's capacity to remain detached from the confusion and the imperatives of omni-diegetic master.

Chapter Six:

“To this day”

1. Introduction

1.1 "To this day"

> So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-pe'or; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day. (Deut. 34:1-6)

A consistent feature of the narrative labelled the 'Deuteronomistic History' (abbreviated to DH where appropriate) is the recurrence of the explanatory phrase "To this day" ('*ad hayom*).[1] It is a turn of phrase which explains the continuing presence of a place name or a geographical feature, and is most commonly ascribed to a single Deuteronomistic redactor (abbreviated to Dtr), who seems to be passing comment on features that have remained extant from the day of the narrative occurrence, until his own day. "To this day" occurs forty four times between Deuteronomy and the end of II Kings (books commonly recognised as the DH and eight times in Genesis (now often understood as the first part of a history that stretches from Genesis to Kings).[2] This frequency is particularly notable because one of the oft-cited characteristics of the Deuteronomistic History is the highly subsidiary role of narrative voice.[3] Throughout the DH, dialogue is generally framed by only the most frugal narrative comments: normally this is a simple inflected verb form such as "and he rose" or "then he said." In this way, the normative structure of the text brings speech to the foreground making readers less conscious of narrative

[1] The phrase is present in a prodigious range of other biblical narratives, but the total count of instances in the Deuteronomic History makes the DH a particularly fruitful field for analysis. In all that follows when referring to the Deuteronomic History, by implication I include Deuteronomic redactions present in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers as per the increasingly popular "Primary History" model which recognises literary continuity stretching from Genesis to II Kings. Cf. Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[2] There is also one instance in Numbers 22:30 (though this is not an etiological comment). This total does not include instances in direct speech when a character reports the continuation of a tradition or fact until their own day within the primary diegesis.

[3] Cf. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p.63.

presence.[4] Most actions are described through the words of participating characters. Consequently the phrase “To this day” is an interruption of significant effect. It not only provides an abnormal proleptic interruption to the progression of the narrative, but also contaminates an otherwise pristine and chronologically consistent presentation of history.

In the overwhelming majority of cases “To this day” functions as an almost poetic refrain and affects only a minor interruption in the progress of narrative and plot. However, although the formula is relatively inconsequential to a surface reading, the introduction of the narrator’s place and time within the story world represents the intrusion of an otherwise entirely separate diegetic plane. The introduction of the narrator/redactor’s world reminds readers that the presentation before them is mediated by the time, place and theology of a historical narrator. This mediation both validates a described historical continuum and, at the same time, alerts the reader to the distance between the world of the text and their own world. Tellingly it also reveals the redactor’s presupposition that his presumed readers will be people who share knowledge of the landmarks he refers to. These consequences are sufficiently unsettling for the phrase to have caused significant interpretative consternation.

The consistency with which commentators have noted the problems caused by the “To this day” formula attests to the depth of diegetic contamination and muddle created by the phrase, especially in terms of understanding the distance between the time of the events described and the time of the narratives’ telling. A number of Rabbinic, Patristic, Reformation and Enlightenment scholars have

[4] Cf. David J. A. Clines, *Interested parties: The ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible* (London: A&C Black, 1995), p. 234; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 114-115 and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p. 190 – 193.

afforded significant attention to the "To this day" formula. Brief summaries of a number of examples include responses such as that of Isaac Abravanel: "The phrase 'To this day' demonstrates by necessity that book [of Joshua] was written long after the affairs it reports"; Jerome's acknowledgement that: "by 'this day' we must certainly understand the time of the composition of the history restored by Ezra"; John Wesley's consideration of authorship: "'To this day' must be among those passages not written by Moses, but inserted", and Hobbes' critical consideration: "As the writer saith 'reamaineth unto this day' needs must therefore be long after the time of Moses and Joshua."[5]

1.2 Purpose of the phrase

Typically, usage of the formula "To this day" makes a simple etymological or etiological case and includes the phrase, "Therefore that place to this day is called…" Of the fifty four occurrences in Genesis to II Kings there is minimal variation in the precise formula *'ad hayom* (in almost every instance it is a combination of a specific converted imperfect verb and a subsequent modified noun.)[6] There is nevertheless significant variation in the application of the formula and in suggestions about the primary purpose of the phrase.

Etymology

The most common application of the phrase is the establishment of a causal connection between a place name and an event reported within the narrative. For example:

[5] Isaac Abravanel, *Commentary on Former Prophets* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Press, 1965), p. 68; Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium*, 1.7; John Wesley, *On Deuteronomy*, 39; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III 33.6.
[6] Brevard S. Childs, 'A Study of the Formula, "Until This Day"', *Journal of Biblical Literature 82*, no. 3 (1963), pp. 279-292, p. 282.

> Israel stoned [Achan] to death; they burned him with fire, cast stones on him, and raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore that place to this day is called the Valley of Achor. (Josh. 7:26)[7]

Very similar examples can also be cited where a place name is described as remaining "To this day" but no causality is posited, and consequently the phrase acts more like an archaeological footnote. For example:

> And the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city, and called its name Luz; that is its name to this day. (Judges 1:26)

The phrase also frequently functions to explain a strange term, title or place name. In such instances "To this day" tends to accompany a simple yet tangential explanation of a genealogy or an individual's name:

> Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites to this day (Genesis 19:36 -38).

It was Gunkel's suggestion that these simple etymological explanations were the original form of the "To this day" phrase, but that more nuanced or perspective-laden examples continued to be added for some time after these original expressions. The effect of this continuum was to obscure the simplicity of the original etymological purpose.[8]

Etiology

An alternative explanation to the etymological proposition is the suggestion that the phrase was used primarily to etiological effect. This hypothesis was advanced by

[7] Detailed analysis of this example is undertaken by Richard Hess who considers the various versions of the genealogy of Achan in Joshua 7:1-24 and 1 Chronicles 2:7. Having reviewed the variant spellings, the etymologies, and attestations of the six names in that genealogy he suggests that 'Achan' was the original name in the story, and the name 'Achar' (which alone among the six names lacks extra-biblical attestation) was later afforded to Achan because of his association with the Valley of Achor and his responsibility for causing 'trouble' (*oukr*). Richard Hess, 'Achan and Achor: Names and Wordplay in Joshua 7', *Hebrew Annual Review 14* (1994), pp. 89-98.

[8] Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis* (London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1901), p. 53.

Friedemann Golka, who suggested that narratives containing the "To this day" formula were primarily orientated towards the explanation of the origin or the reason for the existence of a state of affairs. Despite advancing this hypothesis, Golka nevertheless complained about the lack of distinction between etiological motifs and etiological narratives, and suggested that commentators had inflated the number of purported etiological narratives to the point that almost every tale in the Pentateuch was an etiological in origin.[9] This was a problem Claus Westermann had already noted. He suggested that etiological notes were secondary to etiological narratives – the later enumerating rather than narrating.[10] According to Golka's model, etiological motivations were axiomatic to the structure of Old Testament narrative, but the "To this day" formulas were secondary in importance to the narratives which included etiological meaning within their deep structural "arc of tension."[11] Simple examples include the naming of an altar at Ophrah and the pillar of Rachel's tomb. In both the narrative is etiologically orientated and includes the testimony formula to add additional weight to the etiology proposed in the story.

> Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it, The LORD is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiez'rites (Judges 6:24).
>
> So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), and Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day (Genesis 35:20).

[9] Friedemann W. Golka, 'The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 1', *Vetus Testamentum 26*, no. 4 (1976), pp. 410-428 p. 410. Cf. Petrus Johannes Van Dyk, 'The function of so-called etiological elements in narratives', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 102, no. 1 (1990), pp. 19-33 (p. 33).

[10] Claus Westermann, 'Arten der Erzählung in der Genesis', *Forschung am Alten Testament* (München: Kaiser,1964), pp. 9-91.

[11] Likewise John Bright concluded that etiological stories were attached after the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history were completed at the hand of a redactor who sought to contextualise ancient creatively historicised stories. John Bright, *Early Israel in recent history writing: a study in method,* No. 19 (Cambridge: A.R. Allenson, 1956), pp. 89-100.

In this model “To this day” is advanced as a common component of etiological legends which seek to explain “no end of the questions which interest a primitive people.”[12] Gunkel also explored this idea, suggesting that these applications were “fictitious stories” explaining actual underlying tribal and ethnographic tensions, “explained poetically.”[13] Thus Genesis constantly returns to definite places, such as Bethel, Penuel, Shechem, Beersheba and the trees, wells, and stone monuments there because these are “the primitive sanctuaries of the tribes and families of Israel” the history of which had been long since forgotten.[14]

Theological explanation

In all of the examples above, and in every other case, the phrase “To this day” legitimates the historicity of the narrative and thereby justifies the account of the text. This is often fairly inconsequential in reception. However, there are also a significant number of examples where more substantial and historically significant theological beliefs or cultic tradition are justified more overtly.[15] In the former category are a number of stories which each point to the miraculous power of God. These pericopae offer much more than a simplistic suggestion of the persistence of a state of affairs or a descriptive summary of causality. They affect a distance of perspective and a theological depth to the narrative as they seek to prove the efficacy of God’s word. An example of this is found in Judges 15:19:

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[12] Golka, ‘The Aetiologies’, p. 419.
[13] Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis,* p. 19.
[14]” Ibid. p. 33.
[14] Gunkel failed to justify his conclusion that etiological legends were the foundational texts (*grundschrift*) of Genesis, rather, this inference was necessitated by his presumption that Genesis demonstrates the almost animistic roots of primitive “Israelitish” religion. Ibid., pp.22-35.
[15] Golka suggests that tribal relationships are the principal cause of etiological traditions. “In the Jacob-Esau Cycle we find that aetiologies always occur when the rivalry of the two persons is to be seen in a tribal perspective. On the basis of sociological and traditio-historical evidence we seem to be justified in stating that the pure family narrative is the terminus a quo of aetiology.” ‘The Aetiologies 1’, p.268.

> And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and there came water from it; and when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkor'e; it is at Lehi to this day (Judges 15:19).

Examples which are primarily focused on cultic justification (for example I Kings 8.8, II Chron. 35.25, II Kings 17.34 & 41, I Sam 5:5 and Genesis 32:25-32) seem to explain not just the continued presence of a cultic practice, observance or law, but the reasons for it. In each case the etiology begins “therefore” or “this is why…”

> When they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD... This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day (I Samuel 5.4-5).

A further, more famous example offers an apology for a cultic practice found in the middle of the story of Jacob’s wrestle with God.

> When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh…Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh on the sinew of the hip (Genesis 32:25- 32).

The division between etymological, etiological and theological purpose may, ultimately, be unnecessary. Fundamentally etymological, etiological and theological purposes overlap in the DH. Indeed, given that the formula is sometimes used to explain names, sometimes words and sometimes religious beliefs or traditions it may be that the purpose of the phrase lies less in what is pointed back towards and more in the reception and inheritance of these traditions. I suggest that the “To this day” phrase is fundamentally audience focussed. Its purpose does not lie in singularly etymological, etiological or theological explanation, but in multi-faceted appeal to the audience. It seems likely that whenever the narrative addressed traditions, places and names that the narrator or redactor was familiar with, he took the opportunity to connect the story with the extra-diegetic community. The purpose of the phrase

therefore lies in its capacity to connect the discourse of history with the discourse and the shared life of the extra-diegetic community.

1.3 Provenance

Given that the phrase “To this day” offers the clearest evidence of the world of the compiler, redactor or editor and that the inclusion of the phrase often includes overt theological, cultural, ethnic, socio-political, temporal and geographical tones, it is not surprising that early form critics paid significant attention to the formula in their discussions about the formation of the Pentateuch, nor that on-going discussions about the nature of the Deuteronomic redaction have given the phrase priority.[16] Significant consideration of the “To this day” formula is common in studies exploring the nature and role of a redactor within the Deuteronomistic History, and since the origins of the documentary hypothesis, studies have consistently asserted that the “To this day” formula is a fundamental indicator of the presence of a redactor. These perspectives are not fundamental to my study, and what follows is therefore a rudimentary summary of the three most important theories regarding the provenance of the phrase. These competing models are (1), that it is part of a primitive background text, (2) that it represents a colloquial idiom employed by a number of the different redactors, or (3) that it is an intentional expression of personal testimony derived from a specific Southern Pre-exilic redaction.

Primitive Grundschrift

According to Hermann Gunkel the “To this day” traditions were part of a broad and primitive interest in the justification of cultic traditions. Indeed Gunkel and others have suggested that pericopae that included the “To this day” formula were amongst

[16] For example Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, *The Time, Place, and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of “Until This Day”* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006).

the most primitive source which underpinned later narratives. Gunkel suggested these were traditions used by "early Israel as a matter of course to explain geographical or tribal names without any scientific spirit and wholly on the basis of the language as it stood."[17] This suggestion supposes that uses of the phrase, "and it is still called *X* to this day," are therefore examples of an author identifying a modern word which sounded more or less like an unexplained name and then proceeding to "tell a little story explaining why this particular word was uttered under these circumstances and was adopted as the name."[18] Gunkel's contention was that such explanation was at the heart of all of the earliest narratives within the Torah:

> The instinct for asking questions is innate in man: he wants to know the origin of things… thus in the legends of Genesis we find the beginnings of human science; only humble beginnings, of course, and yet venerable to us because they are beginnings, and at the same time peculiarly attractive and touching, for in these answers ancient Israel has uttered its most intimate feelings, clothing them in a bright garb of poetry.[19]

Martin Noth (1943), Albrecht Alt, Friedemann Golka (1976) and Burke O. Long (1991) have each expanded Gunkel's view, interpreting the phrase as part of a series of etiological legends, whose fabric constitutes some of the earliest traditions in the Old Testament which remained woven throughout later narratives, indeed Golka concluded that etiological stories derived from the time of the Israelite tribes.[20] Noth and Alt suggested that in a number of examples etiological explanation was the purpose for an entire story and the whole narrative in such cases is considered to be constructed to explain a phenomenon. More recently Susan Zeelander has concluded that:

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[17] Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, p. 28.
[18] *Loc. cit.*
[19] Ibid. p.25.
[20] Friedemann W. Golka, 'The Aetiologies in the Old Testament: Part 2', *Vetus Testamentum 27*, no. 1, (1977), pp. 36-47 (p. 44).

> In the manner of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* ancient writers began with a contemporary condition and created stories that would explain the condition.[21]

This hypothesis satisfies an intuitive reading that a fundamental aspect of ancient story-telling included a desire to explicate complex phenomenon. However, there is much evidence to suggest that the etiology is not the earliest constitutive element of the DH. John Bright has argued cogently that "it can be proved that the aetiological factor is often second in the formation of these traditions and it cannot be proved that it was ever primary."[22] William F. Albright, took a similar approach, critiquing Gunkel's model through examples such as Genesis 25:16, where the etiology of Jacob's name is decidedly tangential to the story. Equally, Isaac L. Seeligmann has explored the etiological sections of *The Book of Jubilees*, a text which adds details to a number of Genesis stories to justify cultic traditions. A clear example of this process is found in the efforts in the *Book of Jubilees* to explain the date of the Jewish Shavuot holiday.[23] This passage suggests that the feast of weeks and the annual covenant renewal are derived from a festival "celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of Noah", the timing of which ("twenty six jubilees and five weeks of years") correlates with the calendar for Shavuot (cf. Jubilees 6:15-18).

Seeligmann's analysis suggests an inversion of the model developed by Gunkel. He persuasively evinces the existence of a rich Jewish tradition of adding explanatory notes to existing narratives, rather than building narratives around names. The fundamental tenets of Gunkel's model lack evidence and the notion of a primitive 'grundschrift' is therefore rarely accepted amongst modern commentators.

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[21] Susan Zeelander, *Closure in Biblical Narrative*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 107.
[22] Bright, *Early Israel*, p. 91.
[23] Isaac Leo Seeligmann, *Aetiological elements in biblical historiography* (New York: Zion 26, 1961), pp. 141 – 142. See Jubilees 6:1 and 6:17 for explanations of the date of the Jewish Shavuot holiday.

Product of many redactors

Brevard Childs (1963) popularised a different notion, namely that 'To this day' reflects the hand of many redactors across a broad timespan.[24] Childs' suggestion is that because "To this day" appears in all of the literary strands identified by source critics "the formula [must] reflect the age of many different redactors."[25] Because of the consistency of language and grammar he believed that the formula was not part of the original traditions but was "secondarily added as a redactional commentary on existing traditions."[26] He suggested that "To this day" should be seen as one of the "major creative forces" underlying many narrative components within Genesis – Kings.[27] He notes that in II Kings there are a prodigious range of sources which cover a timespan of almost 300 years and each contains the refrain.

> The sources are frequently identified and the diversity of age is certain. The formula appears in material most likely from the source styled the "Book of the Acts of Solomon" (I Kings 11 41; cf. 8 s; 9 21), from material in the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (II Kings 8 23; cf. II Kings 8 22; 10 27, etc.), from a collection of prophetic narratives (II Kings 2 2), and only infrequently from the Deuteronomistic historian (II Kings 17 23, 34).[28]

Childs concluded that the formula was not an attempt to justify the status quo but rather an element of personal testimony and contemporary insight to historical narrative added to the text of the DH by innumerate hands who all sought to confirm the traditions they had received and personally knew to be true. [29]

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[24] Childs, 'A Study of the Formula.'
[25] Childs, 'A Study of the Formula', p. 292.
[26] Ibid., p. 290. It is difficult to explain how Childs can note the consistency of the language whilst arguing for application across centuries. His hypothesis depends on the notion a wide variety of redactors felt equally compelled to add their own personal testimony formulaically: "In personal testimony… writers are recording independent traditions to which they add the formula secondarily… adding to and confirming a received tradition" (p. 292).
[27] Ibid., p. 279
[28] Ibid., p. 292.
[29] Ibid., p. 282. Two further categories also exist: sometimes the phrase "To this day" is found in direct speech which affirms the nature of things in the day of one of the characters and there are also sociological comments associated with "To this day" that they are not genuinely etiological.

Southern Pre-exilic Redaction

Abraham Kuenen (1870) suggested that the 'To this day' phrase is evidence of a wholesale and single-handed redaction of the DH whereby theological and ethnic prejudices are justified through reference to earlier traditions. This notion has subsequently been developed frequently, with significant detail (and some deviation) being added by Frank Moore Cross (1973), Mordechai Cogan & Hayim Tadmor (1988) and Jeffrey Geoghegan (2003) amongst others.[30]

Abraham Kuenen was the first to note that a significant element of the "To this day" comments amounted to a Judean assertion of dominance over Edom and of the illegitimacy of the Northern Kingdom. Examples he cited included phrases such as, "So Edom revolted from the rule of Judah to this day" (2 Kings 8:22) and "So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day" (I Kings 12:19).[31] These express a specific context in space and time much more than some other examples of "To this day" because there is only a limited window in which such proclamations could have been made. Frank Moore Cross built on these observations, positing a dual redaction of the DH. He suggested that there was a pre-exilic redaction prior to the final 6th century version of the text and that the 'To this day' phrase was part of the intermediary rather than final redactive level. He noted that, "in portions written by the Deuteronomistic author, the expression 'to this day' presumes the existence

[30] F.M. Cross, *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997) (pp. 268 – 283); Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 11, New York: Doubleday, 1988) (pp. 96-97, 186, 214) and Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, '"Until This Day" and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History', *Journal of Biblical Literature 122* (2003), pp. 201-227.

[31] For a range of further developments see Thomas Römer (ed.), *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History,* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000); R. E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative* (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1981) and Richard D. Nelson *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSS 18 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

of the Judean state."[32] His conclusion is still seen as compelling by many, such as Richard Nelson who has concluded:

> The recurring phrase 'to this day' represents the redactional contribution of a pre-exilic historian witnessing to the continued existence of realities mentioned in sources. This phrase is incorporated into every source known to have been employed by the historian. It is used in close proximity to obviously Deuteronomistic material and touches on Deuteronomistic interests.[33]

Cross, and those who have followed his lead, pay particular attention to I Kings 12:19, which offers incontrovertible evidence of a pre-exilic Judean interest in at least some of the strands containing the 'to this day formula.'[34] Here the narrator passes judgement on the Northern kingdom: "So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day." Jeffrey Geoghegan has built on Cross's insights regarding the provenance of the witness formula whilst rejecting the notion of a double redaction. He comments that the geographical, socio-political and theological assumptions implicit in pericopae containing the "To this day" phrase reveal an overwhelmingly similar interest and knowledge. He claims:

> The *to this day* traditions represent a unified temporal, geographical and religio-political perspectives on the basis of which we are able to identify when [the Dtr] lived, where he lived, and even why he wrote. [35]

Geoghegan's model suggests that the "To this day" formula is part of the final compilation of the history and he notes that the phrase is used with reference to

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[32] Cross, *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic*, p. 275.

[33] Richard Nelson, 'The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The case is still compelling', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 29*, no. 3 (2005), pp. 319-337 (p. 326).

[34] Cross's original suggestions have generated a range of suggested adaptations including argument for an earlier Hezekian, rather than Josian, history. (See B. Halpern, 'Sacred History and Ideology: Chronicles' Thematic Structure-Indications of an Earlier Source', in *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text,* ed. by R. E. Friedman, Near Eastern Studies 22 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 35-54. Also A. F. Campbell and M. A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), p. 130: "Since Cross's original studies, the theory of a dual redaction of the DH has had numerous defenders and now stands on firmer evidentiary ground."

[35] Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, The Levites and the Literature of the Late-Seventh Century', in *Scribes Before and After 587 BCE: A Conversation*, ed. by Mark Leuchter (Journal of Hebrew Scriptures 7, 2009), p. 33.

almost exclusively 'Southern' geography, referring to only two regions, six individual towns, seven memorials and three natural landmarks. [36] He identified limited and distinct religio-political themes which were of significant interest to the narrator:

> The rebellion of the North and of Edom… Subjugation of Hivites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites… Non Israelite forced labour… the curse on Jericho… the removal of the high places…proper handling of the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH, the rights and responsibilities of Levites… centralized worship… Judahite-Edomite interactions… The reading of Torah of Moses.[37]

All of the issues he identifies in pericopae connected to "To this day" traditions are of demonstrable interest to a priestly, pre-exilic, southern redactor. This is particularly obvious in the four matters attested to more than once: the presence of Jebusites in Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63 and Judg. 1:21), the naming of Havvoth Jair (Deut. 3:14 and Judg. 10:4), the naming of Beer-sheba (Gen. 21:25-33 and Gen. 26:31-33) and the presence of non-Israelite forced labour within society (Josh. 16:10 and I Kgs. 9:15).

I am broadly persuaded by Geoghegan's suggestion that the formula was inserted in one single act of compilation or redaction.[38] It is difficult to adjudicate between redactional models, however the singularly southern, priestly, pre-exilic perspective of the phrase is good reason to support the notion of a single redaction. The continued presence of "until this day" at every level of the history is evidence that the element of "personal" testimony found across the diverse strands of the DH may well be the product of a single historical redactor confirming the plausibility of

[36] The regions and towns are: Havvoth Jair (Deut 3:14 and Judg 10:4), Cabul (I Kings 9:13), Gilgal (Josh 5:9), Emek Achor (Josh 7:26), Luz (Judg 1:26), Mahaneh Dan (Judg 18:12), Perez-Uzzah (2 Sam 6:8), Joktheel (2 Kgs 14:7). The memorials are Moses' Tomb (Deut 34:6), Achan's Burial Mound (Josh 7:26), the Burial Mound at Ai (Josh 8:29), the Burial Cave at Makkedah (Josh 10:27), Absalom's Pillar (2 Sam 18:18), the Jordan crossing Memorial (Josh 4:9) and the Ruins at Ai (Josh 8:28). The landmarks are the springs at Lehi (Judg 15:19), the spring at Jericho (2 Kgs 2:22) and the Rock at Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam 6:18). The exceptions are found in 2 Kgs 17:23, 34 and 41. The geographical focus here is on the North but each example is overtly critical, describing the deportation and idolatry of the northern tribes.

[37] Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, '"Until This Day" and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History', *Journal of Biblical Literature 122* (2003), pp. 201-227 (p. 213-14).

[38] Cf. Geoghegan, *The Time, Place and Purpose* pp. 10-41.

diverse received traditions extant in his day and, in his mind, worthy of inclusion in the final history.

1.4 Hypothesis

Much has been said about the process of redaction in the Deuteronomic History and the significance of the “To this day” phrase as a contextualising ‘witness formula’. There is now a broad consensus about the phrase epitomised by Geoghegan’s review of the geographical scope and theological interest associated with the phrase, and his hypothesis of a single southern pre-exilic redactor is persuasive.

My assertion is that examples of the “To this day” phrase do indeed help to justify conclusions about the redaction of the Deuteronomistic History but that occurrences also provide a provocative lens onto the nature of narratological mediation, subjectivity and authority. It is more theologically profitable to ask what “To this day” formula reveals about the interior hermeneutics of the DH than about the context of the redactor. The formula is an implicit admission of relativity; an overt expression of the narrator’s own hermeneutical situatedness; and an acknowledgement of his role as an interpreter of sources and traditions. These revelations are potentially of substantial theological significance, whilst observations about interpolation and the date or identity of the redactor(s) are of excavative value but limited interpretative impact. The distinctly subjective view of history revealed in the phrase, and the demonstration of narratological self-awareness illustrates that the narrator understood his role as a compiler and teller of history, not just a recorder of a chronology. “To this day” interrupts the primary diegesis metaleptically, folding in the world of the narrator into that of the story and introducing the narrator’s time and place, an inclusion that implies a depth of ‘self-involvement’. Understanding the text

in this way has the potential to meaningfully and significantly inform the manner in which the history is read.

In the following analysis, I therefore intend to examine the significance of the phrase in comparison to other narrative interruptions in the Deuteronomistic History, and explore the use of "To this day" beyond the DH, including in classical literature. These directions bring into focus the 'strangeness' through which "To this day" conflates or compounds timespans and geographical distance and the manner in which the reader's immersion in the history is inevitably suspended. I contend that in this movement the reader's own day is re-positioned relative to the narrative and that despite its frequency in the Deuteronomistic narrative, the 'Testimony Formula' remains an anomalously overt acknowledgement of, and invitation to, profound subjectivity.

2. Authority and Subjectivity

2.1 Other narrative interruptions in the DH

Whilst the "To this day" formula affords the reader of the DH a uniquely overt disclosure of the narrator's presence, there are other interruptions, parentheses and asides within the narrative that include overt evaluation, reflection or commentary.[39] Direct comments by the narrator to the narratee demonstrate *overt narration,* and in these circumstances the presence of the narrator may be tangibly discerned in a space and time beyond the location of the primary diegesis. The "To this day"

[39] Cf. David Toshio Tsumura, 'Coordination Interrupted, or Literary Insertion AX&B Pattern, in the Books of Samuel', *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* ed. by Lenart de Regt, Jan de Waard and Jan Fokkelman (Leiden: Brill, 1996) pp. 117-132. Also David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), p. 577.

formula is a primary example of overt narration, but there are many other instances which articulate precisely the same narrative stance. These moments attest the narrator's spatial, temporal, theological and geographical points of view, though not as overtly as the “To this day” formula. Whilst the narrator in the DH is generally laconic, offering rudimentary stage management of the primary diegesis, his extra-diegetic interventions often significantly interrupt the otherwise sequential progression of the story.[40] I suggest that there are a number of overlapping forms of interruption including phrases that are demarcated by the clause, “in those days” and that disclose the temporal distance of the narrator from the action of the narrative; explanatory parentheses which are external to the temporal progression of the narrative; and interventions that introduce a secondary name for a place or person.

Much like the “To this day” formula (and closely related to the phrase), “In those days” (*bayamim hahem*) distinguishes between the time of writing and of the events in the story. There are seventeen occurrences in the DH, the following two being typical:

> In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel. Haz'ael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel (2 Kgs 10:32).
>
> And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, and Phin'ehas the son of Elea'zar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days) (Judg. 20:27).

These instances establish a temporal divide between the events described in the primary diegesis and the time of the narrative act. Most occurrences simply reveal the narrative to be a retrospective history (e.g. 2 Kings 10:32, above) and in such instances “In those days” is an idiomatic reminder of the timeframe of the primary diegesis. In five instances however an explanation is being offered for a state of

[40] Cf. Adam Stewart Brown, *Discovering David in Light of 1 Samuel 25: A Narrative Critical Reading of 1 Samuel 24-26* (McMaster University PhD Diss., 2009).

affairs that no longer persists. These refer to the presence of the Nephilim (Gen. 6:4), pre-monarchic government (Judg. 17:6), the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (Judg. 20:27), a dearth of prophecy (I Sam 1:3) and burning incense to Moses' bronze serpent (II Kgs 18:4). Cumulatively they begin to reveal the context and situation of the narrator. His world is replete with prophets and kings but deprived of giants, the Ark, any meaningful prophecy, and Moses' Nehushtan. This narratological world is glimpsed only briefly, and barely begins to intrude into reality represented in the primary diegesis.

Explanatory parentheses typically include tangential comments which function somewhat like a footnote (often citing another source or reference) offering further evidence in support of the story or clarification of an obscure detail:

> And Gideon said to them, "Let me make a request of you; give me every man of you the earrings of his spoil." (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ish'maelites.) (Judg 8:24).
>
> David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. (He ordered that The Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar) (II Sam. 1:17-18).

A number of these instances include a definitive sense of temporal distance between the extra-diegetic comment and the narrated action of the primary diegesis. One instance even includes the "To this day" testimony formula, which illustrates something of the close relationships between the two devices:

> Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands… Ba'anah, and… Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Be-er'oth (for Be-er'oth also is reckoned to Benjamin; the Be-er'othites fled to Gitta'im, and have been sojourners there to this day) (II Sam. 4:2-3).

Finally a particularly frequent form of intrusion may be found in instances where a second name for a person or location is offered (most commonly Jerubba'al/ Gideon, Mount Si'rion/Hermon, Bethel/Luz and Jebus/Jerusalem). These instances clearly

indicate the hand of redactor who has added a familiar name to one that was already established in the narrative for the sake of his audience who might not have been familiar with a more ancient appellation.

> And the house of Joseph sent to spy out Bethel (Now the name of the city was formerly Luz) (Judg. 1:23).
>
> Now the cities of the tribe of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho… Zela, Ha-eleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gib'e-ah and Kir'iath-je'arim: fourteen cities with their villages (Josh 18:21-28).

As with “To this day” each of these interruptions is found in every source and in each of the foundational documents considered part of the DH. Although “To this day” introduces the time and place of the narrator more explicitly than any other reference, it should therefore be understood as an expression of narrative subjectivity and temporal awareness that is entirely consistent with the other types of interruption found within the DH. The “To this day” formula is part of a paradigm of extra-diegetic interventions, explanations and indicators of narratological temporality that are woven into the fabric of the narrative and are a constituent part of the narrative strategy.

2.2 “To this day” In the canon

Beyond Genesis and the DH, the phrase “To this day” is used a total of forty two occasions in the biblical canon.[41] It is a common turn of phrase that is by no means exclusive to the DH. Many references explain etiological, etymological, ethnological or geological phenomenon in exactly the same way as the DH does. For example, place names and tombs are frequently afforded contextualizing reference:

[41] I have excluded from this count occasions when a character reports in direct speech the continuation of a tradition which persists until their own day as these demonstrate the normalcy of the idiom but reveal almost nothing about the day of the author.

> This is the tomb which he built in Modein; it remains to this day (I Maccabees 13:30).
>
> Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day (Acts 2:29).
>
> Judas went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." So they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day (Matthew 27:6-8).

Instances beyond the DH commonly justify or explain diverse religious traditions. For example in I Esdras (and 2 Chronicles 35:25) annual lamentation for Josiah is elucidated:

> And in all Judea they mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah the prophet lamented for Josiah, and the principal men, with the women, have made lamentation for him to this day (I Esdras 1:32).

In somewhat similar fashion in Matthew's gospel, apologetic explanation is offered for the controversy surrounding Jewish explanations for Jesus' missing body.

> The chief priests… said, "Tell people, `His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day (Matthew 28:15).

Further, in exactly the same way as is found in the DH, ethnic relationships are also explained through the phrase. As with the DH, this category represents the most common use of the phrase:

> The Romans took captive the [Greeks'] wives and children; they plundered them, conquered the land, tore down their strongholds, and enslaved them to this day (I Maccabees 8:10).
>
> And when Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done, he believed firmly in God, and was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day (Judith 14:11).

> [David] wiped out his enemies on every side, and annihilated his adversaries the Philistines; he crushed their power even to this day (Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 47:7).

One final category of uses of "To this day" found in the Bible but not in the DH, are those which God is said to have spoken. In Baruch, 2 Esdras, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the voice of the Lord is said to declare judgement "To this day" or criticise the unfaithfulness of his people, "To this day." These are of some significance as they seem to indicate the voice of God functions with narrative synonymy to the voice of the narrator. The following example from Ezekiel is typical. Here God, in parenthesis, appears to offer Ezekiel an etymology for the place Bamah (which means high place):

> Thus says the LORD GOD: In this again your fathers blasphemed me… wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their soothing odors, and there they poured out their drink offerings. (I said to them, What is the high place to which you go? So its name is called Bamah to this day) (Ezk 20:27-30).

The range of applications of "To this day" in the DH are met and exceeded in the broader canon of biblical texts, so that the overt presence of the narrative voice is experienced in an overwhelming diversity of narrative. This is particularly the case in historical narratives, where the highest frequency of instances occur (for example 1 & 2 Chronicles, I Maccabees, Judith, Matthew and Acts). Even though the frequency of occurrences is broadly comparable, none of the books come close to the total number of occurrences in the DH, where the phrase consequently stands out more and functions like a repeated refrain.[42]

[42] For example, there are eleven instances in c. 40,000 words in 1 & 2 Chronicles and also eleven in c. 45,000 words in I and II Samuel. Though this analysis is undertaken in translation using the RSV text.

"To this day" is not an unusual phrase in the Bible and is not exclusive to the DH. A majority of narratives within the Bible canon offers the personal witness formula "To this day" as a declaration of historical reliability. This is more obvious in the DH than in many biblical texts, partially because of the distance in time between some of the events described and the time of narrator. As the timespan covered within the DH is wider than in many other biblical narratives, the interruption achieves a greater sense of chronological dissonance, narratological relativity and indeed uncertainty regarding the identity, authority and legitimacy of the narrator than is the case in texts such as Ezekiel, Matthew or Acts (for example), where a single narrative voice is associated with a named individual whose own day is identifiable and of intrinsic significance to the narrative.

2.3 "To this Day" in Classical Literature

The phrase "To this day" is far from unique to the authors of biblical history. Several commentators have already described the depth of similarity between the Hebrew formula in the DH and 'contemporazing comments' in ancient histories. John Van Setters for example describes the use of formula in Greek, Roman and Egyptian literature. He suggests that "the witness formula is a historiographic convention… in the same category as source citations, which have the function of raising the credibility of the writer".[43]

The same approach is taken by Childs, who paid significant attention to the etiological content of Greek authors. He observed that Hesiod, Callimachus, Pausanias and Herodotus all afforded significant attention to etiological explanations and that, "moreover, in many of these stories a Greek equivalent to the Hebrew

[43] John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997) p. 50.

formula appears… with particularly great frequency in Pausanias, and in Apollodorus, in Ovid and the *Lives of the Prophets.*"[44] Childs' suggestion was that the use of the "To this day formula" was consistently located in classical literature within the broad traditions of etiological explanations. Further, he also noted that the formula was most frequent in the writings of those who placed significant value in their own personal testimony, notably Herodotus and Pausanias. Both of these frequently verify empirically the continued presence of the tradition from their own observations.

Burke O. Long has also compared the use of the formula in the book of 2 Kings to the "contemporizing summaries" in classical histories.[45] Like Childs, he suggests that the usage found in Old Testament narrative is part of a shared literary convention employed consistently by ancient historians to confirm the accuracy of their own account, a view also held by Marc Brettler, who has suggested that, "the Deuteronomistic historian honestly believed… [he] was simply viewing the past from the perspective of his present, he was writing history like all other historians."[46]

I include here only a brief survey of classical application of the phrase, including the Annals of Thutmose III, Herodotus' *Histories,* Polybius' *Histories,* Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (covering 1450 BC to 120 AD) to illustrate the ubiquity and range of uses that may be found.

The Annals of Thutmose III are records of the military campaigns from the Egyptian 18th dynasty and are found in carved inscriptions on the inside walls of the Temple of Amun at Karnak. Inscribed between 1504 and 1450 BC, they mostly

[44] Childs, 'A Study of the Formula', p. 291.
[45] Burke O. Long, *2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 109 & 297.
[46] Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 78.

record detail of military movements and plunder. Just once in the introductory comments the scribe records the continued presence of a scroll recording the King's accomplishments, "To this day." Here then the formula adds weight to the evidence offered in the narrative.

> Now everything which his majesty did to this town and to that wretched enemy and his wretched army is set down by the individual day, by the individual expedition, and by the individual [troop] commanders… They [are] set down on a roll of leather in the temple of Amon to this day. (*Annuls of Thutmose III*, Karnak, 90)[47]

Herodotus' *Histories* (written in 440 BC) explores the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars and offers a depth of ethnological and geographical traditions – many of which seem legendary or fanciful. There are sixteen occurrences of the phrase "To this day" all of which substantiate an etiological explanation for an ethnographic reality or monument still present in Herodotus' day.

> From Scythes, the son of Hercules, were descended the after kings of Scythia; and from the circumstance of the goblet which hung from the belt, the Scythians to this day wear goblets at their girdles (*Histories IV.11*)

Herodotus also refers to traditions that he himself has observed, continuing "until my day." There are twelve instances of this version of the witness formula.[48]

> From this descent of Rhampsinitus into Hades, and return to earth again, the Egyptians, I was told, instituted a festival, which they certainly celebrated in my day (*Histories II.20).*

Polybius' *Histories* cover the rise of the Roman Republic between 246 and 146 BC. He championed the notion that historical writing should only report that which could be substantiated by eye-witnesses, and therefore he claimed that because his writing was based on interviews it had a factual integrity. He emphasized the

[47] For useful discussion of the relevance of the Annuls of Thutmose III see Van Seters, *In Search of History*, p. 147.
[48] Cf. Donald Lateiner, *The historical method of Herodotus,* Vol. 23 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 260.

testimony of witness interviews and sought to personally validate his witnesses direct experience of events (cf. XII, 4c, 3; 25b, 4). He also claimed that his own main period of history fell within the lifetime of witnesses who could be cross examined (IV, 2, 2).[49] Polybius uses the phrase "To this day" on four occasions, each time as an archaeological or literary footnote adding subtle weight to his claims of authority.

> Cicero stretched his neck forth from the litter and was slain, being then in his sixty-fourth year. Herennius cut off his head, by Antony's command, and his hands — the hands with which he wrote the Philippics. For Cicero himself entitled his speeches against Antony "Philippics", and to this day the documents are called Philippics (*Book 8, 48:1*).

Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* (begun around 27 BC) sought to provide an authoritative history of Rome and the Romans from the earliest fables of its foundation to his own time. His occasional use of the phrase "To this day" is almost identical to that of Polybius who wrote 120 years earlier. Strangely it is found only in the earliest stories he narrates, the later books being devoid of this formula. It is also noteworthy that like his predecessors Livy intervenes often in his narration, noting, "I am unable to say definitely" or "I believe that," but again, such comments appear much more often in the earlier books of his history than the latter.

> In order that wars might be not only conducted but also proclaimed with some formality, [Numa] wrote down the law, as taken from the ancient nation of the Aequicoli, under which the Fetials act down to this day when seeking redress for injuries (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.32).

In his *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch (46-120AD) compared twenty three pairs of famous Romans and Greeks, writing their biographies in parallel to demonstrate the comparability between the two. To this end he is criticised for frequent inaccuracies because often it seems that extracting a comparison was more important to him than factual precision or historical accuracy. Plutarch uses the "To this day" formula

[49] Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Tradition and the classical historian', *History and Theory 11*, no. 3 (1972), pp. 279-293.

regularly, verifying every possible detail; particularly with reference to Greek practices about which he intends to educate Romans. There are thirty-eight instances of the phrase, of which thirty-six refer to Grecian traditions.

> Moreover, [Cicero's]... fame for oratory abides to this day. (*The life of Cicero*)

The examples above show that use of "To this day" in the Deuteronomic History fits within a continuum of uses across a range of historical sources in the ancient near east, and the usage in the DH is unremarkable in frequency, etiological function and validatory effect. Every occasion within the DH could just as easily have occurred in Greco-Roman or Egyptian texts. In all of these instances the phrase is used to validate some aspect of the tradition which can still be verified in [the author's] own time: most commonly used in reference to ethnological and geographic traditions. There is almost nothing anomalous in the Dtr's employment of the phrase, for it was a totally normal, almost ubiquitous expression in ancient historical narratives. However, there are two minor differences between application of the formula in the DH and in other ancient texts.

Firstly, Geoghegan has pointed out that in a number of ancient sources "To this day" is often accompanied by personal opinions. This is particularly evident in Herodotus' writing:

> Herodotus will pass judgement on a tradition, even expressing incredulity despite the presence of confirmatory evidence…conversely, Dtr does not privilege us with his opinion on these matters… While Herodotus will express his opinion about the reliability of an account, Dtr does not pass judgement on his sources.[50]

It is arguable (and perhaps worthy of greater analysis) that Dtr is no less willing to refer to his own day, but is more reserved about offering his own opinions overtly.

[50] Geoghegan, 'Time, place, and purpose', p. 137-138.

Secondly, the most significant difference is that the “To this day” of biblical narrative relates to the unspecified day of an entirely anonymous narrator. Conversely, the application in similar histories was frequently rooted in attempts to validate the reliability of the narrator as a witness. Herodotus, Polybius, Livy and Plutarch are all overt about their identity as the Historian and narrator behind the text and when they say, “To this day” the reader knows almost exactly which ‘day’ is referred to. The “To this Day” of the DH however relates to an ambiguous temporality. It does not ground the narrative in the specific context of a named interlocutor nor proclaim the authority of a single figure. Unlike the works of the named historians, it therefore implies a sense of the perpetuity of days and remains particularly open to dialogue with the ‘day’ of the reader.

2.4 Temporal Fusions

The use of “To this day” in the DH is one thread within a continuum of purposeful etiological, etymological and theological interventions in the Deuteronomistic History. The presence of the formula provides particular insight into the relationships between the temporality of the narrative voice and of the diegesis itself and the tensions between these two time frames.

Firstly, whilst Robert Alter has commented on the economy of the narrative structure in the history, where the majority of the plot is unfolded through direct speech, there is a high frequency of interjections (such as “To this Day”) which regularly reveal the perspective and presence of the narrator. This somewhat undermines Alter’s argument:

> Narration is thus often relegated to the role of confirming assertions made in dialogue—occasionally, as here, with an explanatory gloss. In regard to the

> proportions of the narrative, third-person narration is frequently only a bridge between much larger units of direct speech.[51]

Whilst Alter is right that the plot often develops through speech, it is also the case that the regular incursions into the diegesis of phrases such as “To this day”, and “In those days”, ensure that the perspective of the story-teller is rarely far from the surface of the narrative. Without saying much, through the briefest parentheses, explanations, tangential sub-stories and personal witness formula, the narrator’s own subjectivity and narrative presence are disproportionately felt.

Secondly through the juxtaposition of authoritative hetero-diegetic narrative structure and the introduction of the historical and geographical context of the narrating self, the narrative invites an understanding of the subjectivity of representation in an entirely anomalous manner. The presence of the narrator’s own day dominates the temporal landscape of the text and as a consequence the diegetic structure reads less like a primary layer with addended extra-diegetic conversation and more like an amalgam of loops of temporality, for the time zone of the text is regularly switched backwards and forwards between the narrators’ own day and the time of the events he describes. The diegesis includes the time of the events themselves and of their telling and, by silent implication, the immeasurable interval in between. This metaleptic contamination of temporalities also brings the reader’s context and subjectivity into frame, and creates a dissonance that denies a simple reading of the DH as an authoritative and objective historiography. This dissonance is amplified through reception over time: for “To this day” becomes incrementally more confusing the more days that there are separating the reader and the narrator.

[51] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 82.

Finally, and most significantly, “To this day” reveals the profound paradox of all biblical narration. Biblical narratives offer no overt mechanism as a justification for the authority of the story they tell, and yet they persist in claiming that their own stories are universally true. How can it be that a story-teller, who is an undeniably finite expression of space and time, can represent that which is universally true whilst holding quite comfortably to her own subjectivity and finitude? It is not a surprise that biblical narrative purports to be a true and accurate representation of reality (as is explicitly the case in Luke 1:4), nor is it a surprise to read of a narrator whose self-disclosure of subjectivity involves him within the frame of the story (for example II Peter 1:16). What is curious about the “To this day” formula however, is that it juxtaposes the notion of authority with that of anonymous narratological relativity: as if declaration of self-involved relation to the discourse is no barrier to proclamation of the divine view. That the narrative voice can, at the same time, own its subjectivity whilst claiming to report God’s verdict is either an act of profound locutionary hubris, or else a revelation that human agency is not precluded from the divine manifesto.

3. Hermeneutical Implications

3.1 The Things Themselves

Consensus suggests that in the Deuteronomic History the narrative voice is omniscient; a contention evident in the voices of numerous exegetes. Robert Alter, for example, has stated that “through a dizzying epistemological trick the self-effacing figures who narrate the biblical tales, by a tacit convention in which no attention is paid to their limited human status, can adopt the all-knowing, unfailing

perspective of God."[52] This is an idea repeated by J.P Fokkelman, who suggests similarly that omniscient narrators make themselves scarce and from "mid-Genesis to II Kings only comment where essential".[53]

However conventional this notion is, it seems strangely misplaced; after all, what is 'essential' about the sustained presence of a rock, a place-name, or any other etymological detail included with the "To this day" formula? [54] None of these issues is central to the plot of the narrative, leading to disparaging suggestions that perhaps "To this day" references are historically anachronistic tangential interpolations of cultural imperialism.[55] To the contrary, given that the "To this day" interventions intrude into carefully framed dialogue, and bring the identity, geography, theology and context of the author into focus, I would suggest that the Deuteronomic redactor is prodigiously explicit about his own relativity. This is not a clumsy inconsistency or accidental metaleptic contamination, nor should the pre-exilic, southern, priestly point of view identified be imagined as a weakness or limitation of the text. Rather, the Deuteronomic History is richer for the confession of the interlocutor's position in time and space. Such context is always relevant to the story a narrator tells, and the Dtr's inclusion of his own '*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein'* (historically effected consciousness) within the narrative is a revelation of relativity and a statement of self-awareness. Such moments of narrative presence are not occasions in which the subtle author has dropped his guard; this is not the

[52] Ibid., p. 157.
[53] Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: Vow and desire (I Sam. 1-12)*, Vol. 4 (Assen, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1993), p.13.
[54] For the oft repeated suggestion of the omniscient stance of biblical narrators see David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 23. The confession of subjectivity found in "To this Day" invites question as to whether the narrator is really inviting or implying a sense of omniscience and inerrancy in the direct speech they report, or if this a coincidence of the dependence on dialogue for characterisation.
[55] Cf. D. Kahn Bar Shay, and J. J. Shirley (eds.), *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009,* Vol. 52, (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

omniscient façade cracking; on the contrary, the interventions are deliberate and purposeful. The effect of this personal witness to geography, politics and religious tradition within the narrative is that the reader becomes aware of a previously extra-diegetic character, whose voice (having previously functioned predominantly to connect chronological events) becomes important in its own right as a mediator between the world of the story and of the reader.[56]

It should be noted that the confession of temporality is in tension with the narrator's frequent claims to know the mind of God, which is why the witness formula is sometimes seen as clumsy interpolation. The narrator within the Deuteronomic history does often claim a degree of divine sagacity and transcendence of perspective which routinely leads to the observation that "the narrator in [the Deuteronomistic History] speaks with a sense of divine omniscience."[57] There are many examples where the text pronounces divine judgement, most famously those in which the narrator describes YHWH's verdict on the life of a ruler:

> Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uri'ah the Hittite (I Kgs 15:4-5).

Statistically, there is a strong positive correlation between positive pronouncements and the longevity, prosperity or militaristic success of the rulers described in narrative. Likewise negative judgements ("he did evil in the eyes of the Lord") almost always refer to those whose reigns were short, or unsuccessful. The Deuteronomic narrator's way of highlighting a fulfilled prophecy is another indicator of the claim of

[56] Cf. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p. 141.
[57] Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 319.

authority.[58] I would not disagree with the observation that the narrator claims sometimes to speak with divine knowledge and authority, but would note that the confessions of subjectivity in the "To this day" formula function as a counterpoint. The narrator is given a voice that is the same time liminal and inspired, transcendent and incarnational.

Because of the selective nature of the witness formula those states of affairs described as persisting "To this day" are perceived as possessing a temporal and geographical factuality. It is highly improbable that the Dtr chose to substantiate the things he did for any reason other than his certainty about them. There is no legitimate reason that the Dtr could have been so selective in the things he described as continuing until his day unless he was relatively confident of these things. The fact that he doesn't validate some of the most important of his theological claims suggests very strongly that those which he does are selected, not because of their relative importance, but because of the evidence for them. It is then, precisely because not everything is afforded a witness formula attesting to accuracy or continuity, that the narrator himself becomes 'grounded,' and 'situated,' even 'real-for-the-reader.' The limits of the narrator's knowledge revealed through the subjective validation of moments and monuments locates the speaker's place and time as the deictic centre of the text and reveals that the narrator considers himself to be part of a common world, shared between the prefigured history he describes, the imagined audience he addresses and his own situation. The narrators' intervention in the world he describes produces an unexpected amalgam of subject and object, for the narrator claims commonality with the things he describes and invites the reader to understand that the extra-diegetic world is as equal a part of 'the

[58] Examples of events declared to be prophetic fulfilments include 1 Kgs 13:26; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12; 17:16.

things themselves' as the stones, monuments, time and space of the primary diegesis. The day of the narrator therefore operates as an extension of the represented revelatory world. The narrator places his own world within the scope of the diegesis. Gadamer explains:

> Thus the world is the common ground, trodden by none and recognized by all, uniting all who speak with one another…The infinite perfectibility of the human experience of the world means that, whatever language we use, we never achieve anything but an ever more extended aspect, a 'view' of the world. Those views of the world are not relative in the sense that one could set them against the "world in itself," as if the right view from some possible position outside the human, linguistic world, could discover it in its being-in-itself… The world is not different from the views in which it presents itself.[59]

The narrator describing his own day in the DH can be understood through Ricoeur's model of threefold mimesis, for he is persuaded that the view of the world he possess (m_2) is a realistic representation of what has been (m_1) and what will be (m_3). It is not that he seeks to assert a mimetic totalitarianism, rather, sharing such common ground with the patriarchs and prophets that were his predecessors he cannot imagine any other world. He has, after all, touched the stones, drunk from the wells and seen the monuments described in the stories he has inherited. The narrator in the DH models a readerliness of history that allows his own day to be absorbed within the text. He prophetically lays claim to the future, anticipating that his audience will also find that their own day shares common ground with the narratological context and the represented past.

[59] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated from the German 2nd edition (after the first edition of 1960) and edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 404.

3.2 Self-Involved Reception

The narrator's intentional self-referentiality throughout (and indeed beyond) the Deuteronomistic History precipitates an awareness of the relativity of the story-teller's perspective and thereby invites a reciprocal awareness in readers of their own significant and unavoidable subjectivity. This process provokes a much greater sense of self-involvement than could otherwise be achieved, and is a mechanism that has also been identified by Markus Bockmuehl in diverse texts including Matthew 28:20 ("I am with you always"), Revelation 2:7 ("Whoever has ears, let them hear") and I Thes. 2:13 ("We thank God continually") where the present tense or the first person perspective employed by the interlocutor invites the reader's self-involvement.[60]

> In these cases and in many others, the implied reader is drawn into an act of reading that involves an active part on stage rather than the discreet view from the upper balcony… The realities of which the Bible speaks are properly only accessible to believers like the implied reader.[61]

Bockmuehl suggests that narration in the present tense engulfs the reader and places inalienably "transformative and self-involving demands" on her.[62] Similar comments are found in the interpretations offered by a myriad of theological commentators, including Anthony Thiselton and Donald Evans, offer similar conclusions without necessarily sharing an underlying hermeneutic. Thiselton suggests that in the narrative structure of the synoptic parables, "Jesus does not simply throw down a message but comes to meet the hearer in the parable-text."[63]

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[60] Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, p. 72. A similar point is made by Richard Briggs: "Where self-involvement is most interesting and significant is in cases where the stance is logically (or 'grammatically') entailed by the utterance itself. This is most obvious in cases where the language is present tense first person language." Briggs, *Words in Action*, p. 150.
[61] Ibid. pp. 72-73.
[62] Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word,* p. 46.
[63] Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 34. He contends that the writers of the New Testament "regarded the message of the cross as bringing into the sharpest possible focus a clash

Donald Evans notes a similar sense of readerly engagement but locates readerly obligations in the 'exercitive force' of biblical language rather than plot or structure. Exploring Speech-Acts in Genesis, he suggests that "even to call God creator is confess the reader's own human status."[64]

Each of these responses imply that biblical hermeneutic ought to acknowledge that reading involves much more than a fusion of the horizons of the text and the horizons of the reader, for the inner-biblical hermeneutical process evident in the narrator's disclosure of his own day demonstrates that the text itself is a conglomeration of prior representations and realities fused, ordered and orientated towards reception. The inclusion of the narrator's day is merely one example of a continuous strategy across biblical narrative that invites a self-involved interpretation and the repositioning and reinterpretation of the reader's world in relation to the narrative, exactly as has already identified in Ricoeur's model of 'configuration'. Ricoeur suggests that, "meaning occurs at the intersection between the world of the text and the world of readers, it is mainly in reception that the capacity of the plot to transfigure experience is actualised."[65]

The hermeneutical models of Werner Jeanrond and Jean Ladrière are also of particular interest here. Jeanrond suggests that reading texts theologically provokes "authentic experience which does not leave unchanged the person… In these texts a reality imposes itself upon us which shatters our self-understanding."[66]

Jeanrond's model is founded upon the suggestion that theology is necessarily hermeneutical and that theological texts themselves are constituted by both their

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with, and potential reversal of, very widespread horizons of expectation." Here Thiselton builds on the work of Ernst Fuchs, *Studies of the historical Jesus,* (Cambridge: A.R. Allenson, 1964) p. 129.

[64] Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement*, p. 262.

[65] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 242.

[66] Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, pp. 133 & 150.

internal organisation and "external relatedness."[67] He considers texts to be "dynamic potentials" the semantic promise of which can only ever be realised when appreciated for the "concrete situatedness" of their own context as well as the "situation of communication which is also constitutive of meaning."[68] His conclusion is that the theological content of the bible, which is ultimately located in the person and the event of Jesus Christ, is "only accessible" to those who involve themselves in its discourse. It is not that the human self should be the starting-point for interpretation (as Ricoeur sometimes seems to suggest), rather critical self-awareness of the reader's own situation is one aspect of hermeneutics.[69]

> No concept of understanding can lay claim to adequacy unless it includes right from the start a dimension of criticism regarding both the matter (*Sache*) of the text and the situation in which the interpretation takes place.[70]

Jean Ladrière posits a similarly nuanced relationship between the reader's present and the hermeneutical circle. He proposed that theological discourse and language are self-constituting acts of understanding: for properly theological statements only 'work' when readers or hearers re-examine their own sense of the relationship between "one's self and the world" and accept certain axioms.[71] Jeanrond develops this further, suggesting not only that the involvement of the self is a pre-requisite for successful interpretation, but that it is the goal of successful interpretation too: "sense is disclosed only for those who, through interpretation, enable reference to

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[67] Ibid., p. 7.
[68] Ibid., p. xv and p. 7. Cf. Werner G. Jeanrond, 'After hermeneutics: The relationship between theology and Biblical Studies', in *The Open Text*, ed. by Francis Watson (London: SCM, 1993), pp. 85-102 (p. 88).
[69] Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation,* p. 150 and Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Academic, 1993), p. 112.
[70] Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, p. 64.
[71] "Le sens de notre vie ne sort pas tout entier d'une pure réflexion ou d'un rêve intérieur, le sens de notre vie nous est suggéré par les rencontres que nous faisons. [...] L'homme généreux rencontre des grandes circonstances et l'homme mesquin rencontre des circonstances dépourvues d'exaltation." Jean Ladrière, *La foi chrétienne et le destin de la raison* (Paris: Cerf, 2004), p. 35.

themselves to take place."[72] Ladrière's notion of auto-implication is founded upon the claim that religious texts contain 'auto-implicatif' effects.[73]

> To see Christ in the mystery of God, one must already possess a certain rapport with that mystery. One must already have been transformed by the divine action.[74]

Here Ladrière locates the necessity of self-involvement within the speech-acts model, suggesting that felicity conditions for the text require prior acceptance of some of the tenets and presumptions of the text.

My suggestion builds upon Ladrière's and Jeanrond's approaches whilst also borrowing from Kierkegaard's notion of appropriation, and Ricoeur's claim that "Spiritual interpretations all seek in one way or another to make us participate as believers in Christ's sufferings through a life of sacrifice and letting go of self."[75] I suggest that the open-ness of the self to transformative interpretation is a pre-requisite of biblical hermeneutics, but this is not because hermeneutics is solely self-discovery, nor because it is a perlocutionary inevitability, nor because reception is integral to the text. Rather the reader's self-involvement is obliged by the interior hermeneutic of the narrative which reveals the presence of a self-involved narrator, and which shows itself to be unavoidably orientated towards a discourse of transformation. Through reflexivity, subjectivity and self-disclosure narrative voices in the biblical text often reveal that their narratives are shaped by perspective and are attending primarily to meaning in history rather than mere events, "cloaked and needful of interpretation."[76] This is not to say that willingness to disclose personal narratological context and self-involvement denudes the text of validity as

[72] Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, p. 153.
[73] Jean Ladriere, *Language and Belief* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972) p 92.
[74] Ibid., p. 102.
[75] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 287
[76] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 58. See also Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading biblical narrative: An introductory guide* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999), p. 23.

description, history, report or statement, but rather that the biblical text does not seek to obscure the narrator's self-involvement in history. In this the text itself stands as an anticipation of concomitant readerly self-involvement in the 'literary event.'[77]

It might be concluded that moments of narratological self-involvement 'give the text legs', they legitimate a range of self-involved reception and prove the "dynamic potential" of the text.[78] The self-involved narrator solicits the response of a self-involved reader, who, whether or not Edom and Israel still fight, and whether or not Jacob's stones still stand, can talk of her own day as part of the continuum of biblical narrative. Narratorial self-involvement is thus the embodiment of the invitation extended to readers toward similar self-involvement, and is a strategy to ensure reception: after all, the text can continue to have an effect "only if those who come after it still, or once again, respond to it."[79]

Thus the value of the self-referential narratological intrusions in the Deuteronomic History is not particularly the precision of etiological explanation or the useful geographical or cultural clarification. Rather, with 'auto-implicatif' force such moments generate profound capacity: for the world of biblical history can absorb and fuse further future hermeneutical horizons if, as invited by the narrator's own participation in diegesis, the reader will emulate the accents of self-involvement disclosed by the narrator. Here, in the admission of relativity and subjectivity represented by the "To this day" formula of the Deuteronomistic Historian, is evidence of Auerbach's sense of figures finding fulfilment in the recuperative development of human consciousness, history and understanding. In the

[77] On 'The Literary Event' see Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of literary reception*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 18.
[78] Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, p. 156.
[79] Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of literary reception*, p. 22

Deuteronomistic History the intervention of the narrator reveals that the pronouncements, judgements and declarations of the text are the product of a specific and unambiguously corporeal voice. Further, the introduction of this unusually overt layer of humanity within the hermeneutical process reveals that knowledge of the divine perspective proffered in sacred texts is necessarily and unquestionably mediated by the perspective and context of the narrating interlocutor.

Given that the Dtr repeats the testimony formula alluding to his own context so frequently, it is clear that he is unabashed about his role. This suggests that the intrusion of the self-referential narrative voice is not insignificant or peripheral. To the contrary, the narrator's inclusion of his own context within the story is a profound admission of temporal finitude, embodied subjectivity and personal perspective. This is an odd juxtaposition which suggests that the narrator considers their narrative project to be a legitimate fusion of subjectivity and authority, and audaciously, that the one arises from the other. The situation of the self then, is a legitimate subject for inclusion within divine drama. Indeed, the subjective voice that has redacted or compiled the history includes their contextualising witness formula in interruptions that detrimentally affect narrative cadence and diminish certainty regarding the omniscient and authoritative point of view sustained in much of the narrative. It seems that the Dtr is unafraid of the inescapable connection between the context in which he tells and the context of which he tells, as though he is unperturbed by the notion propounded by Heidegger that "time itself is something we are made out of, before it is something we can [describe]." [80]

[80] Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*, trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 24.

3.3 The Tyranny of Time

> The Old Testament… presents universal history and everything else that happens in the world can only be conceived as an element in this sequence.[81]

Auerbach's famous observation reflects upon the seemingly totalitarian cosmology that appears frequently in biblical narrative, even if on occasions the narrators themselves are conscious and overt about their own finitude. Auerbach's thesis is certainly supported by the universal declarations of truth which abound in Genesis and the DH. Such claims do indeed suggest a singular and non-negotiable model of history. Genesis alone offers one hundred references to "the earth" and ten to "all the earth." Between Genesis and II Kings the phrase occurs twenty times, and fourteen of these make apparent claims of universal factuality, for example in Genesis 11:8, "The LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth," or in Genesis 41:57, "Famine was severe over all the earth." Similar claims covering the entire span of space and time are a consistent feature of many other biblical narratives. Obvious Gospel examples include Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age," and John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God."[82]

Narrative comments that imply omniscience in regard to the fullness of time and the breadth of space understandably seem to suggest that an "omnivorous" world view is implicit in the text.[83] Nevertheless, I would suggest it is not the form, or even the approach of the text that makes it tyrannical, rather it is the span of time

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[81] Auerbach, *Mimesis,* p. 16.

[82] The omnitemporal reality purported by apocalyptic visions are even more enveloping and reality-consuming than those cited above, for these suggest that the experience of time that the reader participates in is itself entirely absorbed by a bigger extra-temporal reality. Revelation 21:1-4 is typical of the tyrannical demands of this genre: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more… for the former things have passed away."

[83] Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's story: Bible, Church and narrative theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 37.

and space covered within a narrative that shapes a sense of tyranny in the perception of the hermeneut: any narrative that asserts a truth claim regarding the totality of time is thus necessarily tyrannical. Conversely, a narrative that makes a truth claim relating to only a limited moment and a limited geography is necessarily less demanding.[84] To make a claim about a moment in time is to assert *a* truth but to make a claim about all time is to assert *the* truth – both are exclusive representations, it is just that the latter generates more obligation and has more consequence and significance than the former.[85] If the time span covered within a text includes past, present and future epochs or eons, the absorption of the reader's reality within the span of the narrative is a necessary corollary. It is the breadth of time reported on, rather than the manner in which it is reported, that is of most significance to a reader's sense that her own world is a part of the totality narrated within a text.

I would therefore dispute Auerbach's notion regarding the autocratic tyranny of the world of biblical stories. It is time which is tyrannical and not text. Any text that offers a narrative representation of elapsed time purports an exclusive version of reality. This is not because the representation itself is an act of tyranny, but because time is a tyrant. Time, unrepeatable, unrelenting and unyielding, possesses all the characteristics of a despot. Whilst the future may be pluripotent, the past is decidedly binary, and therefore any mimetic comment about what has happened (or indeed is happening) is a claim upon reality that excludes, or that logically contradicts, other versions or interpretations.

[84] George Lindbeck adopts a similar approach, claiming that any "comprehensive outlook", and in particular, realistic ones must be represented in narrative representations that "seek to encompass rather than replace the world of ordinary experience." George Lindbeck, 'The Gospel's Uniqueness, Election and Untranslatability', *Modern Theology 13*, no. 4 (1997), p. 235.

[85] Thus, for example, to claim in almost any narrative form, that "On the 9th of November 1892 a boy was born in Berlin" offers so little of space and time that the claim must be absorbed into my sense of reality rather than the other way round.

Ultimately then, the biblical narrative is truly tyrannical, not because it possesses unusual appetite for world-views, nor because it possesses a unique realism, nor because it is abnormally voracious, but because it attempts to describe universal time, from creation to consummation. Time is the ultimate tyrant, and by virtue of the biblical purview of time (a scope that includes the described events, the context of the narrator and the circumstance of all future readers), the biblical narrative must necessarily convey a totalitarian perspective. There is very little about the mimetic form of biblical narratives that is unique: a range of the structures, artistry and composition found in the Bible may also be found in the great works of Herodotus, Polybius, Livy and Plutarch. Indeed, the words of Ezra and Nehemiah are decidedly less demanding and totalitarian than Josephus' representation of history. It is not ultimately the structure, style or shape of the narrative that separates the biblical stories from their ancient narrative counterparts or comparators; rather it is the amplitude: the comprehensive breadth of time encompassed.

Because of the human condition and experience of being, the tyranny of time is unavoidable and therefore no 'realistic' mimetic representation can be democratic. Chronology is never liberal and sequential stories must lay claim to a non-negotiable version of reality. At the same time however, the very act of telling a story is an act of defiance against the tyranny of time rather than a conspiracy to subjugate: to narrate is to lay claim to a truth that transcends the finiteness of human experience. I therefore suggest that a story-teller is she who is least willing to accept the tyranny of time; seeking freedom from the consuming ingurgitation of chronology through figure, meaning, recursion and metaphor. In narrative, the narrator asserts a definition of a moment or span of moments that resists the rapaciousness of time. For if conscious reflection, recollection and retelling in narrative were not sustained,

the tyranny of time would be absolute. It is through our capacity to produce figure, symbol and metaphor that we assert the existence of meaningfulness in history, and through our narratavized memories that we save events from the cold dissipation of the past. Narrative asserts themes and meanings in sequences and invites understanding of the transcendence of providence or purpose above the passage of time. Auerbach is undoubtedly right that there is an autocratic force at work in biblical narrative, but I contend that this same force, to varying degrees, is common in any narrative sequence that is not explicitly, overtly or entirely fictional.[86] Biblical narratives do not seek to subjugate the reader to a model of reality, rather they seek to rescue us from a 'model-less' view of reality in which the clockwork inevitability of sequence deprives us from meaning, leaving life itself as no more than "the fortuitous concourse of atoms."[87] Biblical narratives compete with other worldviews to identify the purpose above the span of time, and declare that there is a providential force in space and time that cannot be circumvented or obscured by the limitations of subjectivity, finitude or humanity.

Biblical narrative asserts a view of time and space that is undemocratic and subsuming – but only to the extent that any narrative purporting to encompass both the beginning and end of time must be.[88] This is managed without attempt to avoid or deny the subjectivity and liminality of the narrator's perspective, precisely because biblical narratives are not a tyrannical attempt to subject everything else that

[86] Auerbach says, "It insists it is the only real world [and is]… destined for autocracy" (*Mimesis*, p. 15). This insistence is not an aesthetic function or a consequence of narrative style, it is a consequence of the scope of the text.
[87] William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (Government Pritning Office: Washington, 1898).
[88] Thus even Auerbach is subsuming when he makes a claim to a universal true view of history. He offers a totalitarian interpretation of time when he suggests two major historical ruptures, "each constituting moments when vertical, transcendental meaning is shattered in the course of the horizontal, forward propulsion of history." Auerbach's model, and any other that attempts to sketch history, necessarily offer non-negotiable perspective. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, xxvii.

happens in the world into a predetermined sequence.[89] Were they so, there could be no “To this day”; no “I, John”; no “My dear Theophilus”; no, “Let the reader understand”; no, “If only my words could be written down,” and no, “These things are written that you may believe.” Were the biblical text an attempt to depict objective reality any one of these metaleptic movements or narratological interventions would be a failure, and the prodigious quantity of them, a disastrous lapse of editorial prowess. I suggest to the contrary that the truth claims of biblical narratives sit comfortably with metaleptic movements and contamination between narrative levels. This is because biblical narrative is essentially a plea – that God might soon come and render time meaningful. Biblical narrators assert an omni-diegetic providence that transcends discernible sequence, and they include themselves within this framework. From Genesis, through to Job, in each Gospel and in every apocalyptic description, biblical narrative offers resistance to the tyranny of time and stakes claims regarding the meaningfulness of reality, as is demonstrated in the faith of the seer in Revelation:

> I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, “You must not do that!” (Rev. 22:8-9)

To an extent the very act of biblical narration, including the assertion of divine verdict or making any claim to know universal truth, is a failure in logic. Every human voice ought to be silent in the face of inexorable epistemological questions, the size of the universe and the span of time, humbly deferring to the divine, and acknowledging the limitations of the self, as in Job 40:4-5:

> Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.

[89] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 16.

Yet this humility ("What is man that you are mindful of him?") does not precipitate hopeless concession to the incapacity of the human mind to know anything for certain ("What is truth?"). To the contrary, in the face of confusing events, biblical narrators such as the Dtr include their own finitude within the scope of the world they describe. This is because narrative is essentially a creedal expression: it is the assertion that the tyranny of time is not all-consuming. Narrative attempts to liberate moments from the meaninglessness of inexorable chronology. Through description and interpretation the narrative endeavour declares that time itself is in the service of a yet greater master. As Kevin Vanhoozer has suggested,

> The belief that there is something "in" the text, a presence not of the reader's own making, is a belief in transcendence. To read in order to encounter something more than the mere play of signs is… a "wager" on transcendence and a hope in the possibility of transformation.[90]

Biblical narrative should not therefore be perceived as an assertion of a mechanism whereby the Divine dictates truth; it is rather a visceral and necessary statement of resistance against the tyranny of time and the meaninglessness of the past. The biblical narrator suggests that the limit of human experience is not the limit of knowledge, and that the inexorability of human finiteness in time is not the grandest force in the universe, as promised, for example, in Joshua's final declaration of faith:

> And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God promised concerning you; all have come to pass. (Joshua 23:14)

[90] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in this text: The Bible, The Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 455.

Chapter Seven:

The Face of the Other and the

Threshold of the Self

1. Introduction

Moments of metalepsis and narratorial intrusion into the diegetic frameworks of biblical narratives illustrate that biblical narrators have adopted a profoundly self-involved manner of reading the stories and the history of the interactions of God's creatures with each other and with their creator. Through their intrusions in the stories that they tell, biblical narrators evince a considerable amount regarding the internal hermeneutic of biblical narrative. They suggest that situated subjectivity, such as their own, is no barrier to hermeneutics; and moreover, that their narratives cannot be properly understood unless readers also involve themselves in the tangle of diegetic layers, and that reality represented within the story must be allowed to challenge the boundaries of the reader's own world if it is to be properly understood. Through their self-involved responses to the traditions that they have inherited, they establish themselves as figures for their readers and assert that the threshold of human selfhood is properly established in relation to others. In their roles as self-involved interpreters, biblical narrators simultaneously disclose their presence but hide the fullness of their identity. Whilst never the subject of their stories, through apostrophe, frame-breaking and self-reference, narrators' subjective selves supplement the sense of the primary diegesis and amplify the claims of the text upon the selfhood and the reality of those who read. The narrative knot that is created by the narrators' inclusion of themselves within the diegesis has the effect of both alienating those whose hermeneutics ignore diegetic complexity, and also inviting engagement from those who attempt objective, distant or exclusively critical readership. In this way narratorial engagement within the framework of biblical diegesis balances the self-awareness advocated by Ricoeur and the subjectivity

described by Kierkegaard, whilst also displaying elements of the subsuming tyranny observed by Auerbach.

The remarkable subjectivity and self-awareness that is revealed through these incursions into the text suggests that biblical narrators have come to see their own selves as a legitimate part of, or extension to, their narratives. As they interrupt the plotlines to implore a degree of readerly awareness that matches their own eschatological urgency, as they enfold their own day within the diegesis, or as they joke about their own finitude, they invite a number of theological conclusions:

1. Through their self-conscious intrusions biblical narrators acknowledge their roles as readers of inherited traditions. By doing so they model and legitimate a confessing, subjective and self-involved approach to interpretation, thus establishing the foundations of an inner-biblical hermeneutic.

2. They juxtapose admissions of their own spatiotemporal limitations and elements of their own context with bold, or even universal, claims about God. As they do so they express a compulsion toward storytelling, as though their role as creatures necessitates a degree of witness, not despite but because of their subjectivity and limitation.

3. They model the same manner of self-involved reconfiguration that they construe in their characters, and they themselves repeat and reiterate the relatedness to God that they describe within the lives of these figures. Through this process, biblical narrators become extradiegetic figures with the potential for powerful effect upon the reader.

4. As they textualise their own circumscribed temporality, biblical narrators lose themselves within the trajectory of their stories and render their own metamorphisised egos dependent on the divine. In doing so, they place themselves in fellowship with their characters and their readers, legitimating a range of future responses and inviting future audiences to repeat the kind of narrative reconstitution of selfhood that they themselves demonstrate.

These four observations are drawn from the hermeneutical implications observed in the preceding chapters. In the four subsequent sections of this chapter each will be developed in reference to the studies of metalepsis in Mark, Job, Luke and the Deuteronomistic History (as well as the broader range alluded to in Chapter 1), and in dialogue with Ricoeur, Kierkegaard, Auerbach and other theological commentators. They open the close readings that have preceded this final chapter to a deeper theological anthropology, to a range of ethical considerations, and cumulatively, to a detailed consideration of what the blurred boundaries of biblical diegesis say about readers as human selves. They suggest that the proper place of all creatures, including the narrator and the reader herself, is defined in relation to others and, particularly, to the divine Other.

2. Internal Hermeneutics

> What I shall be proposing is that we may have misunderstood the alternatives before us. The 'world of scripture', so far from being a clear and readily definable territory, is an historical world in which meanings are discovered and recovered in action and encounter. To challenge the Church to immerse itself in its 'text' is to encourage it to engage … with those appropriations of biblical narrative on the frontiers of the Church and beyond represented by figures such as Kierkegaard and Jung. If as has sometimes been said, the Bible is itself a history of the *re*-reading of texts, our reading of it should not be so different… Interpretation of the

> world within the scriptural framework is intrinsic to the Church's critical self-discovery.[1]

Through their incursions into biblical stories, narrators stretch the frame of the biblical text and suggest that their own subjectivity, spatiotemporal limitation or distance from the events of the primary diegesis do not disqualify them from re-telling divine drama. Furthermore, narratorial boundary-breaking suggests that subjective self-involvement is axiomatic to the meaningfulness of the text. Such moments reveal the parameters through which narrators have interpreted the stories that they have inherited, and show that the reception history of biblical narratives pre-date their textualisation. Additionally, by making the human agency of writers and narrators a clear presence within the story world, they challenge models for the inspiration of scripture that are founded upon pneumatic dictation alone.

The self-involvement that is manifest at the tangled diegetic threshold of biblical narratives suggests that the Bible's narrators considered their selfhood to be established through the stories of others and within the landscape of God's interactions with his creatures. The manner of the intrusions and metaleptic muddles considered in the preceding chapters each hint towards the fact that that the narrator's manner of interpreting the story that they retell is blended with their own situatedness, faith and interpretative horizon. Thus the Deuteronomistic Historian says "Here I am, in the same world as this heap of stones which still stand in Achor" (Joshua 7:26). The ironic Joban narrator subtly suggests, "Here I am as mediator between God and a righteous sufferer, recording a testimony to his innocence" (Job 19:23). John says, "Here I am, in both the reader's world which has insufficient books, and in the shadow of the crucified Christ." Telling tales of heavenly visions, apocalyptic narrators make claims like, "I, John, am here in the world of tribulation

[1] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 30-31.

and have heard the angels' trumpets" (Revelation 1:9). Taking this stance, and involving themselves within the framework of their stories, narrators invite their audiences to occupy the same role that they themselves manifest. To interpret faithfully, narrator and reader, as recipients of the divine story, must find themselves immersed in and transfigured by it.

What emerges through the range of these narratorial intrusions and boundary transgressions is a cumulative sense of an inner biblical hermeneutic. This is evident in the overt interpretative actions which precede the textualisation of the narrative and are subsequently alluded to through the narrative stance revealed in the extra-diegesis. In addition, the intrusion of the narrating situation discloses a distance between the temporality, subjectivity and perspective of the narrator and the content of the primary diegesis. The juxtaposition of the world within the primary diegesis and the world of the narrator implies that the theological scaffolding and the structures of biblical narratives are able to accommodate and accept the hermeneutical horizons of the narrator. This evidence of inner biblical interpretative processes suggests that biblical narrators were self-consciously seeking to 'configure' history (as Ricoeur explained in his model of mimesis) and that they were engaged in a process of rendering history meaningful, or "making God present" for possible readers, as he had been for them, and as Kierkegaard advocated in his model of contemporaneity.[2] The presence of the narrating self within the text is evidence that biblical narrators embrace the subsummation of their own selves within the framework of the story they tell, and that they invite a symmetrical transformation of perspective in the lives of their readers. Their position, apropos the world of which

[2] Kierkegaard suggested that true contemporaneity meant "to make present the life of the departed glorious one." Søren Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 289.

they tell, suggests that they find the mere depiction of it inadequate, its representation insufficient, and the recitation of a preconfigured worldview unsatisfactory. It is almost as though, through their self-involvement, biblical narrators seek to shepherd interpreters toward a discourse that contemporaneously inhabits the reader's present. They invite a sense of counterpoint between their own configural location (Ricoeur's $mimises_2$) and that of their readers. They seek to ensure that their story-telling is always understood to apply to the "now" of the reader's day and not just the "now" of the narrator.

Narratorial incursions within the diegesis solicit the honest, open and involved presence of the reader within the interpretative process, as though availability for transformation and openness to the world within the text is a precondition for faithful (or felicitous) reading. "Here I Am" should thus be understood as the foundation of the inner-biblical hermeneutic, for acknowledgement of relativity and subjectivity is the first step towards any authentic sense of relatedness between the human self and the divine discourse. Furthermore, locating the self in reference to the other, and developing a story of the other as a context for the self, are necessary steps towards liberty and away from the solipsistic self-first-ness that often governs the stories human tell about themselves and diminishes capacity to love the other.

The biblical text is rich with the faith-filled hermeneutics of self-aware narrators. In the process of self-involvement these narrators hold in tension their own situations and the representations of reality that they perpetuate. They demonstrate an interior hermeneutic that reflects elements of the availability and subjectivity advocated by Kierkegaard and the self-awareness of Ricoeur's 'capable' human

being.[3] It is the faith of the Deuteronomistic Historian that leads him to interpret the stones and cities of his own day as testimony to God's continued involvement in history. The narrative continuum he describes proceeds from the geography, the cultic practices and the ethnic relationships he knows. Similarly his depiction of the conflicted selfhood of David, the complexity of Jacob's family bonds and the interior monologues of the patriarchs extend from the interior monologue, the complexity, conflict and transformation he himself has known. Equally, it is Luke's confidence about Jesus' lordship in his own world that allows him to liberally transgress the boundaries between hypo-diegetic and primary diegetic worlds and between hetero and homo-diegetic narrative stances. His sense that Jesus is the master of his own context means that he is comfortable blending worlds that ought, in a literary and logical sense, to remain distinct. The same hermeneutical processes are also present in the self-referential joke of the Joban poet, who suggests that his own mortality and his delight in the art of writing both own a place within the story of human suffering, and serve a higher purpose through challenging prevenient models of theodicy in a lasting, written, vindicating legacy. In other examples such as Mark's appeal to his reader, the subsummation of the identity of the apocalyptic seer within his vision or the introduction of anachronistic auto-diegesis (such as those illustrated in Chapter 1) equally suggest an approach to prior traditions that demands significant signposting or overt management of interpretative horizons. All of these transgressed diegetic frames are shaped by the faith of narrators whose

[3] Cf. p. 154 above and Paul Ricoeur, *The Just* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), particularly pp. 1-4.

understanding of their own selfhood was transformed by an inherited story or experience.[4]

The interpretive process that is revealed in the transgression of thresholds within biblical narrative is thus a model of hermeneutical subjectivity that conveys a depth of theologically defined anthropology and invites ethical authenticity. These are derived from the narrators' confessions of their own situatedness, and from their understanding that the threshold of their own selfhood is ultimately determined by their relation to the face of the Other and the story of the others. As diegetic thresholds are transgressed, text-bound examples of the synthesis of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) between distinct diegetic worlds are revealed. These moments demonstrate that, before the involvement of any reader, biblical narrative is itself already a fused or muddled horizon in which the narrator's purview and the scope of reality encompassed within the story world have coalesced.[5] Each strand and each layer of biblical diegesis should thus be understood as a muddle of all three of Ricoeur's mimetic stages. Prefigured, inherited stories have shaped the lives of the biblical narrators who interpret their own situation, and forge stories that they hope will shape similar possibilities through reception.

3. Noisy Creatureliness

The self-involved narrators of the biblical texts tell of a story that stretches prodigiously beyond the stories they themselves tell, a story within whose scope they

[4] This chain of reception is therefore a little like Escher's drawing hands: the stories of God's encounter with his creatures provokes the telling of the stories of God's encounter with his creatures, which shape the reading of the telling of the stories of God's encounter with his creatures. The reception and response that narratorial self-involvement models is fundamental to the text's reception and its capacity to recursively bind subsequent generations into the world of narrative, through readership and liturgical repetition, *mise en abyme*.

[5] Reading as a 'fusion of horizons' is therefore an inadequately mono-dimensional model.

have discovered themselves. Their involvement is necessarily personal, subjective, liminal and limited, for they know themselves to be immersed in the domain of which they tell. Mark's direct appeal to his readers exhorts them to respond personally and urgently, locating them within the same continuum as Jesus' disciples. His need to address 'the reader' directly stems from his desire to include his audience within the same framework of urgent life-changing response that he himself has known. The Deuteronomist's inclusion of his own 'day' is a consequence of his conviction that the world he describes is truly contiguous with both his own and that of his reader. He connects history and his own context, rendering both as part of the same story about Divine agency and providence. Luke's inconsistent stance and muddled lords speak of the permeability he perceives between the world of which he tells and the world in which he tells. His description of Jesus' omni-diegetic Lordship lays claims to the reality of the reader, suggesting that every reality and all of time belong to the same master. The irreverent joke of the Joban scribe is a consequence of his delight at his own capacity to offer sustained personal witness in his own actual world on behalf of righteous sufferers. He promises a vindication and a sense of comfort entirely absent in the theological traditions of Job's friends. John's acknowledgment of his own purpose in writing (John 20:31), derives from his sense that the world of which he narrates and the world into which he narrates are the same. Likewise, his acknowledgement that "the world itself could not contain the books" to describe all the things done by Jesus (John 21:25), derives from his certainty that his readers' time and place is part of a spatiotemporal dimension fundamentally shaped by the Jesus he has himself experienced. The apocalyptic vision of God's consuming glory and the narratological stance adopted in Revelation make prodigiously present the suggestion that Patmos and the world of the text's reception are subordinate to the

heavenly reality described in the diegesis. In every one of these instances biblical narrators demonstrate a determined hermeneutic in which they interpret their own present in the light of the past: their own day, their own writing and their own witness are subjugated to the supremacy of the divine, and the only future they can envisage is one equally encompassed by Him. In faith and in encounter these scribes, story-tellers, compilers and witnesses have found themselves to be part of the divine story so profound that it surpasses their capacity to tell it adequately, yet compels them to try.

The self-involvement of biblical narrators reveals that they see story-telling as the beginning of the narrative endeavour and not the end. Through their interventions they make prodigiously explicit the fact that their narratives are theologically purposeful and orientated towards response. The tangle of selves, transgressed thresholds, muddled tenses, imperatives and invitations identified in earlier chapters are narratorial attempts to overcome the limitations of textual representation, to reduce the risk that the story might loss its purpose once it is bequeathed to others, to encourage the "new creation of truth" and to circumvent the finitude of the narrator.[6] The range of texts covered in chapters 1 and 3 to 6 above discount the suggestion that biblical narratives report an exclusively omniscient and objective perspective. To the contrary, each text examined exhibits a nuanced self-awareness of the narrator's role in the interpretation of preceding traditions. Across a full spectrum of narrative styles and approaches, a sense is developed that authors, redactors and narrators often perceived very clearly the convergence of their own reality and the representational world that they sought to describe in narration. Their infractions within the diegesis are not accidental, they are evidence of the

[6] Cf. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, p. 152.

compulsion at the heart of the narrative to 'make present' the theological and historical truths that they perceived to be of most significance.

Thus, whilst the frequent presence of metalepsis and diegetic infractions within biblical narrative may be surprising from a literary critical perspective, from a theological perspective contaminating loops of self-involvement across narrative thresholds are entirely to be expected. After all, the development of biblical narrative is founded on faith in a God whose glory is so manifest, a Christ whose love is so compelling, and a Breath so animated and life-giving that the heavens, the hills, the trees and the stones would proclaim witness if those made in his image did not.

> The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)
>
> The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)
>
> I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. (Luke 19:40)

Within this context the work of biblical narrators ought, therefore, to be understood as an expression of noisy creatureliness. Despite their limitations as witnesses, their own subjectivity and the limits of the spatiotemporal horizons, the self-involved narrators of the bible text still tell stories, because their work is a compulsive response to the story they have inherited and the re-configured way of reading the world that that they have arrived at. They narrate as part of the continuum of the entire created order, whose very purpose is to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."[7] Having found themselves configured by the story that they have inherited, or by the events they have experienced (just as Ricoeur supposed), biblical narrative is written

[7] Douglas F. Kelly, Philip B. Rollinson, and Frederick T. Marsh (eds.) *The Westminster Shorter catechism in modern English* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1986),

under the conviction that the selfhood of the storyteller, radically redeemed, meaningfully explained or fundamentally re-interpreted in encounter with the divine, is a legitimate departure point from which to begin telling the story of God's interactions with his creatures, and through which to invite sustained transformation in the lives of the recipients of the narrative. The voices of biblical narrative interpret and include their own contexts in, and through, the narratives they tell, demonstrating a form of subjective self-conscious realism in which the self need not be the 'blind spot' described by Terry Eagleton.[8] Including themselves within the diegesis, they suggest that they are not naïve to the significance of their own perspective. To the contrary, whilst it is the story of God's interactions with others in history that occupies the majority of the page, the narrator is unavoidably present within the text because the congregation of selves beyond the diegesis, who write and read and respond, are of primary significance to the narrative. In their overt expressions of relativity and through their engagement within the diegetic world, biblical narrators puncture the thresholds that might otherwise keep their stories distinct from the world of their readers, they magnify the metamorphic potential of the text and enhance its capacity to challenge the threshold of the reader's self. The authoritative claims of scripture are not made despite the liminal, limited and subjective status of the storyteller, they are made because of it.

Moments of narratorial self-awareness, diegetic confusion and metalepsis reveal that the biblical narrators are reflective regarding their own interpretations of history and of prior tradition. Their story telling includes a significant degree of extra-diegetic referentiality regarding their own time, place and role, because their narratives lay claim to a reality that includes the worlds represented at every diegetic

[8] "The human subject becomes the blind spot at the centre of the picture, the absent cause of the world's coming to presence." Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', p. 17.

level, including the 'earthly' situatedness of the narrator (so important to Auerbach) and, by implication, the context of the reader. Subjectivity is integral to this model of reality because the purpose of biblical narrative is the re-configuration of the selfhood of the reader in reference to the transfigured faces of other creatures.

Finding threads of providence or purpose within time, and understanding the self through recognising one's own relation to the world (and others in the world), is integral to "capable human beings".[9] Having found precisely this manner of meaning and selfhood within the scope of the narratives they tell, biblical narration is a response to the certitude, authority and power with which God has acted in the events that the narrator now describes in the primary diegesis. It is not that the text imperiously obligates response from the reader, rather the sense of inescapable meaning and the profound weight of providence found in history itself obliges the tale, the telling of the tale and the reading of the telling of the tale, to share a single frame within the story of God and humanity. God's certain goodness, incontrovertible power and limitless grace are revealed in threads of providence and in personal experience, and demand telling, regardless of the limitations of the interlocutor. The finite creature, who finds themselves reconstituted through their interpretation of the providential movements in the past and personal encounter in the present, cannot in good conscience or honest faith hold this understanding furtively. If the universe is created by a benevolent God, if "life itself is grace", then necessarily every conscious creature is called, not just to awareness of this, but to response.[10] Biblical narrative is not an objective, neutral, re-presentation of sequence. It is a faith filled, urgent, self-involved response from those who have found that their own situatedness and significance makes sense when interpreted through the parameters of the divine

[9] Ricoeur, *The Just*, p. 5.
[10] Frederick Buechner, *Now and then* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 87.

story. It is the readerly response of noisy creatures, whose self-involved depictions of prior events are at the same time acts of interpretation and of response. It is the endeavour of those who have come to understand a context for the constitution of their own selfhood, who know that this understanding eclipses their own spatiotemporal limits and who feel obliged to use all the traditions, vocabulary, gifts and authority in their possession to communicate in a manner that transcends the threshold of their own world.

4. Extra-diegetic Figuralism

Characters within biblical narrative convey a depth of earthly, evocative realism and wealth of rich polyvalent figuralism. The honest internal conflicts, human dilemmas and contradictory qualities of the bible's cast of characters invite the repetition of a range of moral, personal and relational qualities in the selfhood of the reader. Close readings of moments of metalepsis and instances of narratorial intrusions in the biblical text reveal that through their self-involvement within the parameters of the diegesis, the personae of many biblical narrators are themselves also textualised as figures of faithful and transformed selfhood. The refigured sense of selfhood attested to in the self-involved interruptions of the Bible's narrators therefore merits consideration in the same way as the model of selfhood configured within the lives of characters in the primary diegesis.

It is unsurprising that biblical narratives routinely locate the foundational identity of scriptural characters in reference primarily to God. From Adam to Ones'imus, the primacy of the divine Other as the source of the referentiality for the human self is repeated consistently. Jacob wrestles with the divine, finds himself and is renamed (Genesis 32:24). Moses is an adoptee left in the reeds by his family and

an exile with no assets, who finds himself reconstituted as a law-giving leader, prophet and patriarch by the absolute Other who defines himself (ironically perhaps) as the "God of your father" (Exodus 3:6). Samuel, the eldest son sequestered in the Temple in an apprenticeship with a visionless priest, is called by name. Though named 'God hears', he becomes redefined as the hearer of God (I Samuel 3:1-10). Isaiah, though grossly aware of his own unrighteousness, when asked, "Whom shall I send?", nevertheless answers as Adam should have. Instead of hiding he says, "Here I am!" (Isaiah 6:8) Simon, the fisherman, is made Peter, the "fisher of men" (Matthew 4:19). Mary Magdalene, formerly possessed of demons is addressed intimately by name, and, as the first to see a renewed vision of the resurrected rabbi, becomes the first Christian evangelist (John 20:18). Alongside the fullest imaginable collection of other figures, each of these characters is portrayed as discovering their sense of self in reference to their creator, redeemer and king.[11] In perpetual figural function they encourage the constitution of the self through a revised sense of referentiality and relationship toward God.

None of this is unexpected; after all, these characters are chosen for their figurative potential and their capacity to illustrate reconfiguration, transformation or conversion. The power of these figures is more than adequately addressed in other

[11] The value of these figures is not necessarily located in the vividness of the metamorphosis they illustrate; rather, as in Auerbach's model of realism, their significance is found in the visceral, naked, concrete, contingent selfhood that they display. As a consequence, amongst the prodigious range of characters who function as figures of a transformed and reconstituted selfhood, there are very few who do not display significant vulnerability, failure or weakness. Amongst the most potent biblical figures are those whose own voice is employed to address their own sense of self Isaiah's distress in the face of God's glory (Isaiah 6:5), David's confession of guilt (Psalm 51) and Paul's acknowledgement of false righteousness (Phil. 3:6) all follow and echo the self-conscious fallenness expressed by Adam. Within the same pattern, even though he is an undeniably hypo-diegetic and fictive figure, the soliloquy of the lost son speaks powerfully of precisely this abased self-constitution. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:19), he says, provoking a pathos in the reader more powerfully than a multitude of finely detailed aesthetically-real figures might. The unresolved discourse of selfhood within the heart of the king, the prophet, the apostle, the patriarch and the parabolic son are shaped by the irreconcilable and irreducible bundle of contradictions established in the actions and character of each. It is this that makes them such rich and realistic figures.

studies.[12] What is new in my analysis is the suggestion that self-conscious intrusions into the diegesis by the narrator are also significant illustrations of biblical selfhood. This is not to suggest that the narrator represents a unique figural category, or that this model of self-involvement trumps the constitution of selfhood exhibited in his characters. Rather, the selfhood of biblical narrators deserves a degree of primacy because their self-constitution in relation to the narrative of God's action in the world must, necessarily, have been established before the story that they tell was textualised and collected in a canon. The self-involved, self-aware, subjective stance of "To this day", of "If only my words could be written", of "Let the reader understand" and of the story teller who happily muddles diegetic masters, are a consequence of what God has already done in the experience and in the world of the narrator. Moreover, because such moments situate the narrators in reference to the Divine story, they function as figures of self-involvement and reconfiguration that appeal directly to other extra-diegetic recipients of the story. They should consequently be understood to prefigure the transformative hermeneutic and reconfiguring response that biblical narrators expect from their readers. Through their involvement within the stories they tell, biblical narrators provide a typology of transformation that is not directly, or necessarily, born out of theophanic encounter on Mount Horeb or conversation with Jesus in the upper room. Instead they are figures of a reconfiguration that is possible beyond the threshold of the biblical stories, and thereby, they are of particular significance to others who live outside the text and beyond the boundaries of the diegesis.

Through their intrusions, the identity and selfhood of the Bible's story-telling voices become additional witness to the divine Other's sustained capacity to

[12] Cf. Maren Niehoff, 'Do biblical characters talk to themselves? Narrative modes of representing inner speech in early biblical fiction', *Journal of Biblical Literature 111*, no. 4 (1992), pp. 577-595.

transfigure and transform. Furthermore, despite the power they possess as mediators between traditions received from the past and transmitted for the future, these narrators refuse to make their egos central to their narratives, joking about their role (as in Job 19:24) or referencing their own context without unveiling their faces (as in the Deuteronomistic History). Even when their identity is important to the authority of the narrative, such as in apocalyptic texts or where apostolic authority is required to legitimate veracity, they still find ways to avoid prominence. In these instances they allow their own earthly self to be subsumed (as with John's context on Patmos shrinking into the background behind the hypo-diegetic vision), or talk of themselves in a cryptic third person (as with "the beloved disciple" of the Fourth Gospel). In this, they are figures of the same humble witness that advocated by the Psalmist, who exhorts, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory" (Psalm 115:1), and that is epitomised in the character of John the Baptist who says, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Without taking centre stage Biblical narrators declare "*Glotzt nicht so romantisch*", and they foreclose undemanding, impersonal interpretations. They model a manner of selfhood located in the story of the Other, that is humble, unpretentious and full of hope, and they suggest that the same transformative process at work within the stories they tell is also at work beyond the threshold of the narrative. I contend that Biblical narrators, in their metaleptic intrusions, subjective incursions and self-involved interventions, offer their own transfigured faces as images of those who have already been persuaded by the power of the stories they tell. When Biblical narrators speak across diegetic thresholds, self-conscious of the otherness of their self to readers of the stories they tell, as extra-diegetic figures, they add their personal and perpetually contemporaneous witness to the story of the Other and the

others transformed by Him. They do this without upstaging their characters and without diluting the authority of the stories that they tell. In a sense they model the figural role of the witness as it is articulated by Emmanuel Levinas:

> The witness testifies to what was said by himself. For he has said, "Here am I!" before the Other; and from the fact that before the Other he recognizes the responsibility which is incumbent on himself, he has manifested what the face of the Other signified for him. The glory of the Infinite reveals itself through what it is capable of doing in the witness.[13]

5. A Congregation of Readers

The way in which narrators include and define themselves in relation to the stories that they have inherited suggests that their comprehension of their own selfhood is constituted through their sense of belonging to a broader narrative. In this they model the narrative constitution of selfhood that is propounded by Ricoeur:

> Stories generate a partnership by making our fragmentary stories converge with the encompassing story… This convergence [develops] through a challenging relationship… to a stage of reconciliation [and] when the story is re-enacted in the liturgical celebration, then the story and our story become one and the same.[14]

Nevertheless, as well as illustrating Ricoeur's model of narrative identity, biblical narrators also invert it. Rather than establishing a story of the self and then locating the others, they establish a story of others, and indeed the Other, and in moments of narratorial self-involvement and diegetic frame-breaking they demonstrate that they locate themselves within this continuum. They evince the inseparability of narrative and selfhood, but resist the establishment of a selfhood that is forged through the centrality and significance of their own individuality. Refiguring the self within the boundary of the story of God's action and in reference to the divine, they reveal a

[13] Emmanuel Levinas, 'Ethics and Infinity', in *CrossCurrents 34*, no. 2 (1984), pp. 191-203 (p.198).
[14] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, p. 242.

radical model of selfhood, which, in its fullest expression is found in the surrender of the definition of the self to the story of the other.

Having arrived at this manner of self-understanding, biblical narrators also invite readers to allow their own day, their time, their perspectives and their narratives of self-constitution to be subsumed into the story of the other. The witness of the transfigured and fully absorbed self of the narrating other should therefore be understood as an encouragement toward the sense of convergence identified by Ricoeur. Through their self-disclosure (however fleeting or fragmentary), a glimpse of themselves is offered which demonstrates a manner of self-conscious reception and which solicits a symmetrical response. They encourage readers to reimagine the threshold of the self and allow its reconstitution in the convergence of the story of the self and of the Other. This form of self-constitution opens the reader to new ethical and anthropological possibilities.[15]

> The text displays or even embodies the reality with which it is concerned simply by witness or 'testimony' (to use Ricoeur's favoured word). It displays a 'possible world', a reality in which my human reality can also find itself: and in inviting me into its world, the text breaks open and extends my own possibilities.[16]

When the reader realises that she is invited to follow the narrator into a model of selfhood that is defined by divine story, arguments about genealogy, primogeniture or seating priority at the eschatological feast are rendered absurd, and the competitive economics of horizontal relativities give way to a non-competitive relativity. As Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests, "because selfhood is ultimately grounded in relation to God, the person can encounter his social situation in

[15] Cf. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 97: "As a reader I find myself losing myself… The metamorphosis of the world in play is also the playful metamorphosis of the ego." What Ricoeur identifies in the process of reading seems also to be present in the process of narration.
[16] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 133.

freedom."[17] Grounding the identity of the self in the story of the Other/others is of profound significance, for contemporaneity with Christ means not only face-to-face encounter with the omni-diegetic Master, but also a renewed understanding of the status of the fragile self in relation to the life of others.

My contention is that phrases such as "To this day", "If only my words could be written", "Let the reader understand", "These things are written that you may believe", "I, John", or "We have beheld his glory" are not anomalous moments of haemorrhage between distinct worlds. Rather, they are the consecration of the permeability between the diegetic thresholds of biblical narrative. Indeed, self-effacing jokes, direct address to the audience, inclusive first person plural narrative stance, omni-diegetic claims and interjection of personal testimony all contribute to a sense that biblical narrators imagine themselves as part of the chain of their stories' reception, rather than as creators of it. It is noteworthy that when biblical narrators include themselves within diegetic frames they place themselves in fellowship with the community of transfigured selves about whom they narrate, a community that Rowan Williams connects deeply with Kierkegaard's notion of contemporaneity:

> From the beginnings of Christian discourse, the community around Jesus in his ministry – the community of disciples and of others, including those who have received from him healing or absolution – was held to be continually present, so that to join the community was to become 'contemporary' with Jesus… This community [is thus] a community of interactive fellowship with Jesus, rather than a community founded by a figure in the past.[18]

As well asserting their connectedness to the life of the characters within the diegesis, narrators position themselves as recipients of the story, and by doing so they highlight the common ground they share with their readers. Located as recipients of

[17] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, *Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), p. 234.
[18] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 251.

revelation and respondents to the divine voice, the voice of biblical narrators seem to belong with the audience.[19] Placing themselves in fellowship with their readers, biblical narrators therefore mitigate the distance between the reader and the divine, allowing the reader to use the faith and perspective of the narrator as a scaffolding for her own. In some ways, by making themselves available as 'we', by appealing intimately through apostrophe and by appearing personally in the witness formula, biblical narrators invite readers to feel contemporaneous with themselves as a step towards contemporaneity with the action of God in the world. Immersed as they are in the world of biblical figures and yet able to address the audience directly, biblical narrators show themselves to have already made the "leap" of which Kierkegaard spoke:

> The leap is a category of transition. It is itself a break with immanence… If I do this, I cannot come back by myself. It is in this moment of decision that the individual needs divine assistance… [for] the leap is made easier when the distance between where the leaper stands and where the leap is to be made [is clear].[20]

Through their own diegetic self-involvement biblical narrators make very clear the nature of the leap of faith they themselves have made. They invite readers to accompany them into the world of biblical narrative and, de facto, into the landscape inhabited by the divine. Having found themselves included in, and thoroughly reinvented by, the texture of the divine story, they show no concerns about dialogue contaminated with disclosure of their own subjectivity, diegetic layers affected by paradoxical operation or narrative structure muddled by illogical temporal loops. These self-involved threshold transgressions ought to be understood as inevitable,

[19] Even claims to have been present within the action of the primary diegesis, as is found in John's suggestion that he saw Jesus' glory, or Luke's claim to have travelled with Paul, are made in the past tense, and therefore add to the sense of distance between the time of story being told or read and the time of God's action in history. This increases the distance between the voice of the narrator and that of God whilst also binding reader and narrator closer together.

[20] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 216, 247 and 307.

and entirely legitimate, features of a manner of interpreting prior traditions, representing reality and telling stories. Such muddles at a narratological level are an imitation of divine discourse: for God, in incarnation, reveals his own capacity for subjectivity; in crucifixion he locates himself paradoxically, and in resurrection operates in defiance of logic.

The story-telling self that emerges through intrusions and threshold transgressions within the biblical story should be understood as the redefined narrator who consistently invites readers to "inhabit the textual world" of the stories they tell, as Frei suggested, and to be transformed as Kierkegaard demanded.[21] Ricoeur is particularly explicit here, suggesting that in this movement towards appropriation and configuration "I exchange me, the master of itself, for self, the disciple of the text."[22] It is not that biblical hermeneutics invite repetition of the lives of the story's characters as though somehow two historically divorced contexts could be reconciled into an identical whole. Rather, as Nicholas Wolterstorff comments, self-involvement precipitates complex collisions between realities and prohibits a homogenous sense of immersion or appropriation:

> We experience a great many points of collision when we come up against the biblical narrative. At many of these points of collision, our modern western mentality ought to bend and give; otherwise the notion of biblical authority is vapid. But not at all these points. We ought not to bend before the social patriarachalism so pervasive in the biblical narrative [for example]… It's too simplistic, then, to say: conform your life to the biblical story. At what points are we to conform?[23]

"Inhabiting the textual world" does not encourage a poor simulation of the preconfigured world, rather it means appropriating the discourse of the narrative,

[21] For full discussion cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Inhabiting the World of the Text', in *Ten Year Commemoration to the Life of Hans Frei: 1922-1988,* ed. by Giorgy Olegovich (New York: Semenenko Foundation, 1999), pp. 66-80.
[22] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 113.
[23] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 79.

constituting the self figurally, and finding an authentic 'contemporaneity' in the same way that the characters and narrators in the text did in their own situations. The invitation of the biblical narrators should therefore be understood according to Ludwig Wittgenstein's suggestion that understanding is like "knowing how to go on."[24] Biblical narrators invite a manner of 'going on' through the interactions they describe in the primary diegesis and through their own diegetic boundary breaking and narratorial self-involvement. In some sense both represent a determined reversal of Adam's first response to God, and an endeavor to redress his attempt to hide. God's first question of his creatures was, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). This question was not asked because God was ignorant, unaware or unable to find Adam, but because he was inviting discourse in which creatures locate themselves in relation to their creator. Adam's answer reveals an anthropology that is rooted in awareness of his otherness but it also demonstrates the vulnerability and limitation of the human rather than the profound capacity of the *imago Dei.* He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). The theological proclamation advanced by self-involved narrators is not just that openness and availability are the foundation for hermeneutics, but also that "Here I am" is beginning of "going on". They do not summon the reader back to Eden, rather, through their self-involvement, they declare that 'going on' appropriately means locating one's own identity in the face of the other even if this means allowing the boundary of the self to leach into framework of a narrative.

Moments of metalepsis within the Bible are textual demonstrations of the narrators' determination not to hide from divine discourse, and they represents the consistent invitation that is found at the threshold of biblical narrative, calling readers

[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. by P. Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) I, 875.

to pursue an equally open stance toward the creator. When a narrator locates herself illogically within her own narrative she suggests that the boundaries of the worlds within the text and the worlds beyond the text are not immutable or inviolable. Biblical metalepsis thus confronts the threshold between reality and representation, provoking a sense contemporaneity and relatedness that transcends the tyranny of time and the 'limit-experience' of the reader. However, before the reader is ever asked to adopt their self-involved interpretative stance and the subordination of her world view (as observed by Auerbach), and before this subsummation is anticipated in reception, it is demonstrable that biblical narrators have themselves fitted their own world into the biblical world. Before they anticipated appropriation in a congregation of readers, the worlds of the patriarchs and prophets, the prostitutes and lepers, the angels and demons have first absorbed the lives and the situatedness of their own story-tellers. Within the hermeneutics of the Christian Church, the act of narration and the act of reading should therefore be understood to share corresponding significance as complementary models of the same movement. Narration models the subjective and self-involved response that it also invites in reading, and both are fundamentally a relocation or repositioning of the self and a reaction to the prior movement of God. In this way the Bible itself holds together the fullest imaginable congregation of believers. Those who read, and those about whom stories are read, are brought into fellowship together by the story tellers who inhabit (and muddle) the extra-diegetic threshold.

6. Concluding Remarks

Through the self-involved narrative stance that they adopt, biblical narrators regularly muddle the logically distinct layers of their own narratives. In their willing contamination of locutionary and ontological thresholds they invite the reader to follow them, and to enter into the divine drama. Metalepsis is one of the most significant devices employed to facilitate this fusion of readerly perspectives with the interior discourse of the text, for it allows the movement of meaning across the extra-diegetic, primary diegetic and hypo-diegetic thresholds, so that words can operate beyond the constraints of their interior world and gain meaning beyond the frame of the text. Nevertheless, few biblical interpreters, commentators or translators have employed the concept of metalepsis as an explanation for illogical muddles of narrative layers, as though acknowledging irrational narrative structure or inconsistent narratorial stance might somehow be perceived as a failing in the text. Once this fear is overcome, and diegetic muddles are acknowledged, strange texts are elucidated and profound latent capacity within the narrative is discovered. Indeed, in some instances, the reader's willingness to entangle herself within the world of the narrative is essential to the development of a meaningful understanding of the hermeneutical and ethical demands of the text.

As figures of self-involvement, biblical narrators frequently include themselves within the frame of their narratives. In doing so they often destabilise the boundaries between representation and reality; they facilitate the reconfiguration of the reader's world; they promote a sense of readerly relatedness to the truth claims of the narrative; they blend previously distinct temporalities; they develop metamorphic potential in reception; and they provide an avenue towards a hermeneutic of

contemporaneity. Through this self-involved immersion in the stories they tell, narrators also (somewhat unexpectedly) circumvent the blind spot of realism. They include their own self within the text's field of vision and confront the boundaries of representation. This mode of narration also asks questions about the boundaries of the reader's own world, addressing the reader's creatureliness and forging theological foundations that are located in the unchanging character of God. They suggest that God himself transcends the division between representation and reality and that he invites disciples to follow him, through Christ, into a revised narrative of selfhood that fundamentally reconstitutes the self as an other-orientated creature.[25]

Throughout the Bible, narrators juxtapose narratorial relativity and divine authority to assert the supremacy of God against the meaninglessness of time and the finite subjectivity of the human. In the New Testament they insist that Jesus is not a memory, or an object of history, but a living presence who resists efforts to understand him any other way. He is to be found in the transfigured selves who demonstrate both the potential of the authentic self and its proper position in relation to others and the story of the Other. In this domain those who give up their claim to self-established selfhood and reconstitute their life according to the finitude and subjectivity of the figures within the text, find that God's eternal presence not only fills the dimensions of the biblical diegesis, but also "intersects and constantly pervades their [own] time."[26] The "Here I am" of the self-involved reader, who attends to the inner-biblical hermeneutics of the self-involved narrator, is met by the self-involved

[25] To this end, Rowan Williams suggests that it is impossible to conceive a human identity that is primitively and only an object to itself, for there is no self-awareness outside the commerce of agents and speakers. "When I think I am imagining myself 'for myself,' I am actually taking up the position of someone who looks at or speaks to me." Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 72.
[26] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. by Reider Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 89.

response of God who says, as per Jesus' parable, "Friend, come closer" (Luke 14:10).

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